Rebecca and Rick White Gallery
Lutnick Library, Haverford College

Enduring Presence 2023

Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania Art

January 16—July 2023

Curated by Adam Waterbear DePaul and Lily Sweeney '23
Digital Exhibit Curator Alex Rodriguez-Gomez '23

Designer: William Roy Hodgson
Printer: Fireball Printing

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Plate 1. Danny Reese, *Drum with minimal design*
Photo: Alex Rodriguez-Gomez

The Origins of *Enduring Presence 2023: Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania Art*

Adam Waterbear DePaul

This exhibit was first conceptualized around a table at a pub just off the Temple University campus in April 2019. Throughout the semester, two Temple English graduate students, Matthew Soderblom and Katelyn Lucas, had expressed interest in Native American studies; the department had sent them my way due to my personal and academic involvement with the subject. Over the course of a few meetings, the three of us decided to create a student organization centered around Native American and Indigenous Studies. We picked up some other very invested students and a wonderful advisor, Dr. Paul Garrett, and met at the pub to discuss making the organization official.

Around the table, we decided to call the organization Native American and Indigenous Studies at Temple (NAISAT) and quickly agreed upon planning Temple's first large-scale Indigenous People's Day Celebration for the fall. During that discussion, Michelle Hurtubise, a graduate student and soon-to-be officer of NAISAT, let us know that the Center for Humanities at Temple (CHAT) hosted an annual art exhibit featuring local artists, and enthusiastically suggested we approach them about featuring artists from the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania (LNPA) in the fall. Ironically, I was the most hesitant at the onset; though I loved the idea, I was straining my memory to come up with Nation Members who were accomplished in the mediums of paint, pencil, charcoal, etc., and I voiced my concern that we might not have enough artwork to fill an exhibit. Fortunately, the others were more open-minded than I, and impressed upon me that "art" could encompass any creative artifact, like beadwork, leatherwork, or textiles, and that the "artists" did not need to be professionally recognized as such—in fact, the general sentiment was that existing art objects of practical or cultural significance would make for a more authentic exhibition than a traditional "fine-art" exhibit that featured Lenape names. Once that sunk in, my mind was flooded with possibilities, and we spent the rest of our meeting enthusing about and envisioning the exhibit, from potential titles to a grand opening ceremony conducted by the LNPA. We parted quite excited.

Before the night was over, Paul had sent out an email to tell us that just after our meeting he had met with Dr. Kimberly D. Williams, incoming CHAT Director, and that she was enthusiastically on board; she was already floating ideas for co-sponsorship, and had raised the idea of inviting the LNPA to perform an opening ceremony on her own initiative. I soon met with Kim and discussed the details, and then we all got to work. While NAISAT brainstormed promulgation opportunities and opening ceremony ideas, I spent the summer canvassing LNPA members for art objects, shopping for picture frames and shadowboxes (generously paid for by CHAT), and installing the exhibit with Paul and my wife Becky, co-curator and contributor to the exhibit. At first, I did not receive a strong response from our members, as many of them did not identify as "artists," but I urged some folks I knew to recognize their existing crafts as exhibit-worthy, and in a few months we had a wonderful collection assembled.

The exhibit, then titled *Everyday Artistry, Enduring Presence: The Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania*, soft-opened in Fall 2019, and we held a wonderful opening ceremony that Indigenous People's Day. During the day, NAISAT hosted an Indigenous People's Day Colloquium, where undergraduate Temple students presented their Indigenous Studies work and research through poster presentations, and in the afternoon LNPA council members conducted an opening ceremony for the exhibit with speakers, drumming, and dancing (again, generously funded by CHAT). I was pleased and surprised by the amount of engagement the exhibit received from students and teachers throughout its installment. I gave many curational presentations to classes and organizations, and received nothing but the most appre-

ciative feedback from attendees. I reported these experiences back to the LNPA council, who were overjoyed that the exhibit was raising awareness of our culture and presence and that it was being received in such a Good Way.

The exhibit continued to go strong into its final weeks, which overlapped with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. My last few curational presentations were cancelled as public gatherings were prohibited for public safety and campus traffic became sparse as distance learning became the norm. As with so much during the initial years of the pandemic, what happened next is a bit fuzzy in my mind. A time came when I had de-installed the exhibit, but I had not yet returned the items to their owners as we were all social distancing, if not sheltering in place. During this time, Haverford College, a long-standing partner of the LNPA (and, in my opinion as Chief of Education of the LNPA, one of the Lenapehokink's collegiate leaders in indigenous engagement and programming), was not letting these restrictions stop their collaborative initiatives; I was still offering regular programs for the college, but now through virtual meetings. During some of these events, I mentioned to Dr. Terry Snyder, Librarian of the College, and Janice Lion, Associate Director for the Center for Peace & Global Citizenship (CPGC), that I had this amazing exhibit just taking up space around my apartment in boxes. Both voiced immediate interest in the potential to bring the exhibit to Haverford. I brought this idea back to Council and to NAISAT, and all were very excited at the prospect. Concrete plans were long delayed due to the restrictions and general haze of the pandemic, but finally, in Fall 2021, I was able to meet with Terry.

Going into the meeting, I was of the mindset that we would simply unpack and install the existing exhibit at Haverford; however, Terry had much more in mind—she gave me a tour of the exhibit space and capabilities, and enthusiastically offered to commit time and funding to expanding and enhancing the exhibit. After a few follow-up meetings with Terry, Janice, and Digital Scholarship Librarian Dr. Andrew Janco, and with generous funding and resources from the Haverford Libraries and the CGPC, we brought on two Haverford interns to lead the project: Alex Rodriguez-Gomez and Lily Sweeney. Sarah Horowitz, Curator of Rare Books & Manuscripts and Head of Quaker & Special Collections at the Haverford Libraries, and Dr. Anna-Alexandra Fodde-Reguer, Research & Instruction Librarian, signed on with much enthusiasm, and we began holding weekly committee meetings.

Working on the exhibit with these fine folks was a pure pleasure. My role was primarily supportive; all the innovative ideas concerning expanding and displaying the exhibit—as well as the lion's share of the work and all the technical know-how—came from Alex, Lily, and the Haverford staff. Every suggestion was presented to me with the utmost sensitivity and respect toward the wishes of the LNPA Council and the authentic representation of our people. Some of the most prominent new contributions from the Haverford team include the digital kiosks, the website, the incorporation of the 2022 Rising Nation River Journey, and the interviews with our "artists," which were conducted by Alex, as well as plans for another wonderful opening ceremony (I am writing this in Fall 2022, and the installation is still underway). I attended our meetings through Zoom from my home in the Poconos, facilitated these and other ideas however I could, and watched with joy as the project grew into the wonderful exhibition it is today.

The Significance of *Enduring Presence 2023: Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania Art*

I was asked to write on my "goals" for this exhibit. I'm more comfortable stating what I see as its primary significance. *Enduring Presence 2023* bears an elegant symmetry of form, substance, and significance. The key to all three—and what sets this well apart from the majority of Native American exhibits I have visited—is its focus on our living, contemporary Nation and culture, which is rooted in our timeless traditions but relevant to and respectful of our people today. *Enduring Presence 2023* is not a typical history exhibit, or a typical art exhibit, or a typical Native American exhibit; it combines elements of all three to bring forward the existence and beauty of a people that are all too often treated only as an historical artifact—if we are treated at all.

Lenape people and culture have suffered extreme erasure in the colonial world and consciousness—and our Eastern Woodland people and presence doubly so. It has been my experience that most people living in the Lenapehokink (our indigenous homelands:

eastern Pennsylvania, southern New York, New Jersey, and northern Delaware), have never heard the word "Lenape." The majority of those that have heard it seem to think that we originally come from "out west somewhere." Some others have learned enough to know of our indigenous homelands, but believe that all the Lenape were killed and/or driven out of the Lenapehokink a long time ago. They are not to blame for these ideas—I still encounter textbooks that promulgate such misconceptions.

Indeed, many of our people were driven out of our beloved homelands. Those who were faced years, decades, or centuries of continuous re-settlement and re-upheaval, fleeing as far as they deemed safe, only for colonialism to catch up with them and uproot them again, and again, and again. The Lenape diaspora were pushed far, and in all directions, and are represented by our contemporary nations in Wisconsin, Oklahoma, and Ontario, Canada, and by communities and individuals in Kansas, Ohio, and many other places throughout the country and continent.

Meanwhile, many of us remained in the Lenapehokink, suffering our own tumultuous journey within our colonized homelands. Some of us remained by going into hiding, some were brought into "indentured servitude," but most of us remained through marriages between Lenape women and colonial men. Most often, these women and their families had to hide all aspects of their Lenape culture, speaking, dressing, and acting like colonists under threat of persecution, removal, or worse. As a mode of survival, we who remained disappeared from the public and government view. That obfuscation has never been widely remedied; rather, it has spiraled into continued and deeper erasure with the advent of United States Federal Government "recognition" practices.

While the Lenape who remained here are largely represented by our contemporary nations in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware, our forced public "disappearance" in the Lenapehokink allowed the government to ignore our continued existence here. As Rev. Dr. J.R. Norwood of the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Tribal Nation in New Jersey notes in his excellent book *We Are Still Here!*: "tribal communities of the colonial period that remained in the east often had no contact with the military or federal authorities and were not enumerated in the manner their western cousins were." As a result, the only federally recognized Lenape nations today are our diasporic nations in Wisconsin, Oklahoma, and Ontario. And, unfortunately, the public still looks largely to the government to tell them where we are (or, more to the point, which of us matter). The states of New Jersey and Delaware have given state-level recognition to our nations there, though this designation doesn't carry nearly the weight of federal recognition. The Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania is still unrecognized by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, which is the only state in the Lenapehokink that has never recognized a single Native American nation.

So, what I see as the most prominent significance of *Enduring Presence 2023* is the simple, but much-needed, awareness and recognition of the Lenape people who never left the Lenapehokink, and who work diligently to revitalize our culture and correct the public's misinformed narratives concerning our history and presence. The exhibit is all the more successful to these ends because it is not comprised of "fine art" composed for art's sake, or historical artifacts created by people long ago; these items sit on our shelves, are played at our gatherings, are carried in our pockets, are worn to our ceremonies (and some, to the general store)—they have been borrowed from contemporary Eastern Woodland Lenape life, and, once they are no longer needed in the exhibit, they will be returned to contemporary Eastern Woodland Lenape life. *Enduring Presence 2023* offers a beautiful experience of our artwork, crafting, and culture; even more significantly, it reveals to the largely unknowing public that We Are Still Here.

Plate 2. Stony Acevedo, *Bear-claw necklace*
Photo: Alex Rodriguez-Gomez

Digital Curatorial Essay

Alex Rodriguez-Gomez ’23

Enduring Presence 2023: Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania Art is an exhibit firmly rooted in the present. As such, it feels fitting that my role in this work was in finding ways to relate the story of the exhibit in a virtual space, both translating the core of the physical space, and supplementing it with new creative materials. Photographs of the exhibit items outdoors, an idea proposed by co-curator Adam Waterbear DePaul, tie the home-like setup of the gallery space with the Lenapehoking, the ancestral homeland of the Lenape people on which the White Gallery and Haverford College sit. Additionally, interview clips with featured exhibit artists Shelley Windamakwi DePaul, Chief Bob Redhawk Ruth, and Eric Lebacz make use of the digital space by drawing on the importance of oral tradition to bring the voices of the artists themselves into the exhibit. These conversations bring out the rich stories behind each item and ground the exhibit once again in the present, reminding us that the artists featured in *Enduring Presence 2023* are our neighbors. The interviews reemphasize the individual artistic practices of the featured artists, each bringing their own unique process and perspective informed by their personal connection with Lenape culture.
I hope that this enriches the experience of the exhibit and, like Chief Bob Redhawk Ruth said in his interview, makes it feel less like a visit and more like a dialogue.

Plate 1. Jim Thorpe Birthday Celebration

Reproduced from Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania June 2022 Newsletter.
Image from 25th annual Jim Thorpe Birthday Weekend, May 21-22, 2022.

Curatorial Essay

Lily Sweeney '23

Many of the pieces featured in *Enduring Presence 2023: Art of the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania at Haverford College* have been in an exhibit before. Tribal councilmember of the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania (LNPA) Adam Waterbear DePaul framed their first configuration *Everyday Artistry, Enduring Presence: The Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania*—an exhibit at Temple University in 2019 which he curated—as a step away from the usual Lenape history exhibit. He wrote in the introductory panel that, "in presenting this exhibit, the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania invites you not to study their history, but to experience their presence."[1] *Enduring Presence 2023* retells the story of *Everyday Artistry* in Haverford College's White Gallery, expanding upon that idea of the "here and now" and highlighting the work of artists of the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania who have made art which revitalizes that which has lain dormant. *Enduring Presence 2023* seeks to show how each piece honors the history, present day, and future of the artist and the LNPA. While they are with us, these art pieces have much to teach us about how we see and feel the presence of the LNPA, tradition as a source for creativity, and building relationships between Indigenous nations like the LNPA and institutions like Haverford College in a good way.

Exhibits about Native Americans, as DePaul points out, often reduce Native American culture to Native American tradition and relegate said tradition to some distant past. It is incorrect to say that tradition is a thing of the past or that tradition is equivalent to culture in general, but the persistent association of Native Americans with traditions of the past specifically surpasses an academic quibble when combined with the "Vanishing Indian" trope; it becomes violent. White Earth Ojibwe scholar Jean M. O'Brien visualizes the "Vanishing Indian" trope in public history and museum contexts in her book *Firsting and Lasting*, where she analyzes local historical accounts of New England from the mid-nineteenth century and demonstrates how, in logic-defying fashion, settlers in New England and elsewhere proclaimed themselves the first civilized people of Turtle Island (North America) and declared the Indigenous people who still lived among them extinct. The accounts illustrate a broader "narrative of Indian extinction" embedded in the culture of the United States, including the framing often used in museum exhibitions.[2] An essential part of these accounts, and the narrative that has pervaded through the rest of US culture is "the production of modernity through purification of the landscape of Indians;"[3] the US became modern when, and only when, those considered "primitives" were deemed extinct. (After all, acknowledging that the people who had a claim to your land before you exist threatens the legitimacy of your claim to said land.) Thus, in creating the Indigenous person and nation as a foil to non-Native modernity, which forcibly forged a link between Native Americans, tradition, and the past, the most common interpretation of Native life and work in exhibition settings looks firmly backwards, despite the twenty-first century reality that Native people grow and change as any other. Native American tradition lives. It lives in camp chairs at pow-wows, in listening to drum songs through air pods, in Zoom-based language classes.

There are interesting historical questions to be explored in regards to the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania, but they are not the questions asked by this exhibit. Instead, *Enduring Presence 2023* asks how Lenape artists live and work today. This exhibit emphasizes the dynamism which is stripped of Native Americans in many other representations and exhibits, as I say again and again that the LNPA live today, and it seeks to highlight the variety of historical and contemporary ideas and formats which the artists have employed. This essay expands on the themes of the exhibit to explore reinterpretation—reinterpretation of tradition through clothing, through mythological imagery, and through the Rising Nation River Journey—and to offer a perspective on the colonial framework of museums, their exhibits, and their institutional practices through the framework of stability and possession—a framework which arose out of reflections on stories.

Eric LaBacz, *Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania T-shirt*
Photo: Alex Rodriguez-Gomez

Clothing, Survivance, and Cultural Markers

When it comes to clothing, which often marks one's personality, cultural identity etc., LNPA members navigate an intermixing between historical and contemporary which is unique to Indigenous people. As a consequence of the "Vanishing Indian" trope, one of the popular images of a Native person in the mind's eye of a non-Native person often involves historical regalia which incorporates elements such as buckskin and feathers, not the clothing that the non-Native people themselves wear. Settlers assume that Indigenous people do not wear "modern" clothes. However, while regalia continues to be worn for ceremonial occasions, everyday clothing as defined by US culture at large—such as jeans, t-shirts, and sneakers—are also worn by Indigenous people.

That said, in addition to the change in their everyday clothing, the regalia of the LNPA has also changed. *Enduring Presence 2023* includes two variations of regalia—"traditional" deerskin regalia and the "contemporary" cotton and suede regalia based around the ribbon shirt. Setting these two outfits next to one another, you can see how the LNPA has changed over time and how it has taken in new influences. Shelley DePaul, Chief of Education and Language of the LNPA and the designer of the historical deerskin regalia, frames this kind of regalia as "neo-traditional."[4] The cloth regalia, worn regularly to powwows and other events such that it was not available until the actual installation of the exhibit, pulls from the trends in regalia which have emerged out of the modern-day powwow, a confluence of multiple tribes and nations in one setting, often to reconnect and return. The ribbon shirt which is at the center of this version is a result of a Pan-Indian movement beginning in the mid-twentieth century and changing perceptions of appropriate dress for ceremonial settings across the continent.[5] Both outfits are worn regularly by folks of LNPA and are deemed appropriate and "traditional," although DePaul did note in the same interview that those who wear 'skins' enter ceremonial spaces before those wearing cloth regalia.[6]

Native people have not taken on "modern" dress without modification. In asserting one's connection to Indigeneity and/or to a specific tribe, band, or nation, clothing, accessories, and hairstyles are reinterpreted and personalized. Although "survivance" was first developed as a lense of analysis by Anishinaabe scholar George Visenor with regards to Indigenous literature, Dr. Jessica Metcalfe (Turtle Mountain Chippewa) applies the framework to Indigenous clothing in her doctoral dissertation, citing the use of Indigenous symbols on clothing as an example of how Indigenous people embody colonial resistance through their presence.[7] Following her analysis of the symbology used in Native-made haute couture garments, the same idea of one's assertion of presence and livelihood is visible in some of the pieces in this exhibit. Eric Labacz's t-shirt is one example of Lenape-specific symbology, designed to be worn and sold by the LNPA. In an interview, Labacz describes how Jim Beer (another artist in this exhibit) worked with him to develop the deeper meaning of the t-shirt. Working from the bottom of the design upwards, he noted that Mother Turtle represents Mother Earth, the two deer symbolize the masculine and femine elements of life, the seven branches on tree of life represent seven stages of spiritual growth, and the hawk is the connection to Creator who is himself represented by the sun.[8] Likewise, Philip Wakteme Rice's beadwork clearly illustrate how he used art and clothing as an extension of his Lenape identity. Both his necklace with the wolf paw symbol and the bracelet beaded with the word "Munsee" signify his pride in his connection to the Munsee clan of the Lenape, whose totem animal is the wolf. All of these items bring elements of "traditional" and "modern" into each other—the jewelry for example can be worn with regalia or "modern" dress—demonstrating how the binary between "tradition" and "modernity" is much more malleable than we think. (Or that there is no binary at all.)

The taking of student's clothing upon arrival at residential schools and the limiting of access to traditional materials such as hides and quills through forced removal have harmed Indigenous communities immensely. But the experience of the ancestors of the LNPA adds an additional layer to this discussion about Native American assimilation and cultural genocide. For the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania, the painful legacy is not solely about the direct removal of cultural clothing or the starving out of resources needed to make those clothes. It is also a legacy of the strategic shedding of cultural markers to hide in plain sight. The Lenape who remained foresaw how "Tribal Indian attire was deemed dangerous in the late 1800s because of its perceived connection to identity, culture, and values" and shed it.[9] Their assimilation into the dress of the settler colonist was coerced, not only through the schoolteacher or

Jim Beer, *Thunder Hand Drum*
Photo: Alex Rodriguez-Gomez

Philip Wakteme Rice,
Munsee Bracelet
Photo: Alex Rodriguez-Gomez

Philip Wakteme Rice,
Wolf Paw Necklace
Photo: Alex Rodriguez-Gomez

hunter, but also with the threat of violence or forced removal, as other Lenape had faced. The legacy of forced removal and the residential school is deeply entwined in the LNPA's histories, but so too is their difficult decision to take off the clothing, despite not having a direct agent of colonization prompting it.

We can frame the clothing of the ancestors of the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania as examples of survivance too. The Lenape who went into hiding held onto their knowledge and ways of life through small, seemingly innocuous details on their clothing despite the risk of discovery it posed. They practiced survivance. "Women often sewed Lenape patterns onto their clothing or painted them onto their kitchen walls. Though outwardly behaving as normal housewives, Lenape women in 19th-century Pennsylvania always took care to leave a deliberate mistake in their handiwork, following the Lenape custom of showing humility before the Creator. Many children slept beneath quilts missing a square or a stitch."[10] The ancestors of the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania practiced elements of their culture as they could, refusing and rebelling against full assimilation. That legacy lives in the choices the artists make, whether it is for the formal regalia or for the lighter and cigarette pouch made of dyed deerskin.

Mix and Match

The idea that Indigenous people are the antithesis of modernity manifests in the work of curators and museums through an assumption that traditional art constitutes the entirety of Indigenous art and that that art draws from a static tradition. Indigenous people are not the sole group who hold tradition close—Euro-American art and culture have their venerated traditions too. But the generalization that all Indigenous art is "traditional" persists because the institutional setting has not broken away from the notion embedded in its founding that the culture of Euro-America is the peak of civilization. As a result, Indigenous art receives less meaningful (and careful) analysis of an individual artist's interpretation and creativity, generalizing a specific piece to represent the "traditional" art form of an entire Indigenous nation or tribe. Indigenous artists draw inspiration from many different directions, not solely tradition, just as non-Native artists do too. Jim Beer's hand drum and the art portraying Meesing on a rock, necklace, and metalwork by Rosemary Bushy, Stoney Acevedo, and Chief Robert Ruth Redhawk, respectively, illustrate some of the complexities Lenape artists and art encapsulate and demonstrate how dynamic tradition is a source of inspiration for their art.

Let's consider the idea that each artist represents in their artwork. In the case of Beer's drum, the idea or representation is of a Thunder—one of the mythological beings which produce the sound of thunder during a storm. Stories about the Thunders vary in terms of plot and characters. The stories usually involve a young man or woman, in conflict with an element of the world or with a relative. This young person connects to the Thunders and, after resolving their conflict, the person either stays with the Thunders or goes home. The Meesing items reference the Lenape cultural hero Meesing, protector of the woodland creatures, especially the deer. There is one central story of Meesing which recounts how Meesing tried to divert Creator's plan to create humans and was humbled in a contest where he and Creator attempted to throw a mountain as far as possible.

Although all four of these pieces draw upon mythological canon for their inspiration, they diverge when it comes to the actual imagery. There is not a clear or consistent visual description of the Thunders in Lenape stories. Thus, the Thunder on Beer's hand drum is a personal interpretation of what it might look like. In contrast, Meesing has a clearly defined image within Lenape mythology.[11] The red and black split down the middle of his face, the contorted visage and look of surprise from when Creator threw the mountain at him, all of these are agreed upon characteristics of Meesing within the tradition of the LNPA. It was not a new or individual creative decision on the part of the artists to represent Meesing as they did, but instead one that was communal and historic. However, if we are considering the material from which the artists made their art, then this flips. Beer's work is traditional/communal and the Meesing artists are recent/personal. Beer's hand drum, both traditional and personal in imagery, is made of deerskin and sinew with techniques that are rooted in historical/traditional practices. In contrast, the objects representing Meesing are a mix of older (the painted rock) and newer (metalwork). In an interview about his metalwork, Redhawk emphasized that Lenape artists use the materials around them—be it rocks or, in his case, scrap metal from his work as a scrap man—even for art made for a very traditional context such as the ceremonies held to honor Meesing.[12] To help

Magdelena Kunkle
Image reproduced from collections of Lenape Cultural Center

Chief Robert Ruth Redhawk, *Meesing Metalwork*
Photo: Alex Rodriguez-Gomez

Stoney Acevedo, *Meesing Necklace*
Photo: Alex Rodriguez-Gomez

Rosemary Bushy, *Meesing Painted Stone*
Photo: Alex Rodriguez-Gomez

ceremony participants get in the right mindset, all three artists worked with a mixture of established imagery and new materials.

Dr. Metcalfe, speaking in an interview, sums all of this up quite succinctly—"We are not just replicating, we are creating."[13] To care for tradition does not mean you must keep everything identical to how it was before. Instead, it is like many other artistic processes—looking to those before and after while grounding oneself in the here and now to create something that suits. The work of the LNPA artists in this exhibit have an individual's interpretation and creation, even if we cannot and should not separate it from its Lenape roots and community.

River Journey

Lenape traditions are reinterpreted by the living people for the circumstances of the moment. The Rising Nation River Journey exemplifies how traditions are reinterpreted and reworked—created not replicated. Undertaken every four years since 2002, the River Journey is a three-week long paddle down the Lenape Sipu (Delaware River) with near daily stops along the way to meet with organizations collaborating with the LNPA in caretaking for the river and to sign the Treaty of Renewed Friendship. There is no historical precedent for the Lenape taking a ceremonial journey down the Lenape Sipu, but to use the words of Chuck Gentlemoon, LNPA Chief of Ceremonies, "we work for that river."[14] The Journey is an exercise in the care the Lenape have always had for the Lenapehoking made to meet both the needs of the people living and the needs of the next seven generations, "bestow[ing] the past, environmentally, culturally and historically, to the future."[15]

The River Journey is about caring for human and non-human relationships. In connecting with organizations and having treaty signings with them, the LNPA is reestablishing itself in the eyes of its neighbors who in turn recognize Lenape communities as the original caretakers of the land on which they too live. Recognition, as it relates more generally to Native Americans, is often used to denote when the government "recognizes" a given tribe or nation, designating them as "real" Natives. That process often sits very uneasily within the context of settler colonialism because the settler state in turn does not need recognition in order to survive. In a video recording of an online discussion with Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education, Chief of Education and Language Shelley DePaul emphasized that the River Journey is about working with people outside of the purview of the state, on the LNPA's own terms, saying:

> I really feel that the path that we've always been on we—we've kind of steered away from the government because they all have such—their stipulations—they don't really understand the culture. They don't even understand how we feel about the land.... But it seems to me that Creator has led us on a path with the Rising Nation River Journey that we are getting the recognition that is much more essential and that is the people that we meet along the river...we do have recognition or else all of you wouldn't be here tonight. You recognize us. And—and that's just as important in my view—I'm just speaking about my view right now. It's always been much more important to me to have that connection to have the connection with all of these organizations and people and individuals y'know some—some individuals have just—have signed the treaty as well. When we first started [the Rising Nation River Journey] back in 2002, we had 19 organizations that signed on with us. Now we've got over 50 organizations and hundreds of individuals so this Treaty and going down the River every four years has grown and grown and grown and we have recognition of all those people. And not just have recognition, we work together as caretakers—not just of the land but of each other, of our elders y'know, of our people who are in need. So that's what recognition sort of means to me. It would be nice if we get the state recognition and if we get it in a good way so that our Indigenous people are recognized. That would very nice. But, like I said, I feel that we have recognition already.[16]

This same sentiment can be articulated in formal academic terms as Indigenous resurgence and as the rejection of liberal recognition politics—a critique articulated by Leanne Betasmosake Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabe), Gerald Taiaiake Alfred (Mohawk), and Glen Coulthard (Dene).[17] For Simpson, Alfred, and Coulthard (working in the context of what is now Canada) the Canadian settler state, in offering recognition and apologies for past harm, does not unseat itself or change the asymmetry of the colonial relationship. The settler state is still setting terms. For the LNPA, they practice resurgence

through the River Journey without the state setting limits on what they can or cannot do.

Despite the growing recognition that the Treaty and exhibits such as the original *Everyday Art, Enduring Presence* and this exhibit *Enduring Presence 2023* give the LNPA, there is still a reason that the LNPA is once more seeking state recognition in a state (commonwealth) that has never recognized any nation or tribe, nearly twenty years after their unsuccessful first attempt. One problem that state recognition may fix is that, per "The Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990," a person cannot sell goods marked as Indian-made unless they are formally affiliated with a federally or state recognized tribe. Without signage denying their own Indigeneity and community, a LNPA artist "can face civil or criminal penalties up to a $250,000 fine or a 5-year prison term, or both" for a first-time violation of the Act. "If a business violates the Act, it can face civil penalties or can be prosecuted and fined up to $1,000,000."[18] The state, not Native Americans themselves, delineates who deserves to call their crafts "Indian-Made." Likewise, eagle feathers, sacred to and used in ceremonies by the LNPA and many other Indigenous groups, are tightly protected by the federal government. In this case it is the "Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act," amended to permit members of federally recognized tribes to hold permits to possess eagle feathers, which is the barrier for the LNPA.[19] Much of the fight about this particular law has been about expanding availability of federal permits to tribes who are only state recognized.[20] But in doing so it still leaves nations like the LNPA without protection from the "fine of $100,000 ($200,000 for organizations), imprisonment for one year, or both, for a first offense. Penalties increase substantially for additional offenses, and a second violation of this Act is a felony."[21] Fighting for the expansion of the permit to nations that are state recognized may help those tribes, but it still upholds the basic idea that the settler state gets to make that distinction in the first place. There are people who have no authority to make or sell things labelled as "Native" and there are people who likewise have no care for the eagle—there is a reason to have regulation of some kind around these things. But whether or not there is some logic to those laws, the fundamental problem is who has the authority to determine who deserves those privileges. As it stands, laws like these violate LNPA sovereignty.

Pinned to a Corkboard: Stability and Possession

One day during the exhibit preparation Adam Waterbear DePaul, co-curator of this exhibit and, perhaps more relevant to this, Storykeeper of the LNPA, spoke with me about the dispossession of Lenape stories by academics. He emphasized that their stories are alive and that using one single, written text immobilizes the story. DePaul, who is currently finishing a PhD alongside his responsibilities to the Nation, has put considerable time and thought into how he can reconcile the living, breathing stories of his people and the smothering reach of the academic world of which he is also a part. In our conversation he articulated that, in writing a story down, you bar it from growing, evolving, and changing. To transcribe and then disseminate a story assumes that the text will not change and that you can read into it as a stable entity. But this ignores the fact that, developed and sustained through the oral tradition, these stories exist in many iterations. And, to cite a singular iteration of the story without acknowledging its multiplicity, as many academics are wont to do, is to reinforce its stasis.[22]

Since an exhibit is a story, even if it is not all words, the arguments DePaul makes in regard to LNPA stories can transfer to LNPA exhibits like this one. In the subsequent discussion of the colonial nature of Euro-American museums, cultural institutions, and exhibits—and this exhibit's place in that—I want to highlight two ideas from DePaul's argument, that of stability and possession.

Stability or Immobility

In an oral tradition there is an inherent fluidity to the "text" because each storyteller will tell it differently from each other and, over time, from themselves. The core elements of the story (generally) stay the same, but the details will twist and change depending on the teller. Despite what I have said about writing stories down as a method of immobilization, text-based stories are not inherently bad. There are benefits to writing something down—the LNPA language revitalization project has certainly benefited from the records of missionaries who wrote down the language that could not be spoken aloud

Above, top:
Treaty of Renewed Friendship, Photograph by Karen Finkelstein, taken at Frenchtwon, New Jersey Rising Nation River Journey stop, 2022.

Above, bottom:
Treaty Signing Drumming, Photograph by Karen Finkelstein, taken at Frenchtown, New Jersey Rising Nation River Journey stop, 2022.

for a century and a half—but it also lends itself to a certain mindset where you assume that you only need one version and that the version which is written down supersedes any and all oral versions in credibility/authority. The flexibility and change of an oral tradition fall to the wayside—you already have a copy of the text, what will another do for you?—and thus the story is immobilized.

So, what about exhibits? To start simple—this exhibit is written down. You are not hearing this essay by way of speech, nor is a visitor hearing the items described or contextualized aloud by a person stationed in the gallery. In this way this exhibit stays quite "traditional" in its approach and format. But despite the "traditional" stability that comes from everything being written down, this exhibit does deviate from the norm because it is a retelling. As I noted at the beginning of this essay, *Enduring Presence 2023* is a reinterpretation of the exhibit *Everyday Artistry, Enduring Presence* held at Temple University in 2019. The same items, by and large, that were on display in the Temple exhibit were incorporated into this one. The title is a very deliberate reference to the first exhibiting of these art pieces under this theme, but in adding the year of the exhibit and the place it was held it also acknowledges all that changed in the three years (and three months of curatorial work) between the two. In this way, this exhibit itself demonstrates a story retold and reinterpreted.

Behind the scenes of exhibits like these, in archives and museum back rooms, stability is the name of the game because the goal of such institutions, as they stand now, is to preserve the items in their collections for future generations. Institutional care practices, such as those addressing access and use, are built around what will keep the items in the same state in which they have come into the museum. (Or perhaps better if there is conservation work done.) Thus, we seek, through the climate-controlled, UV-blocked storage in these places, to keep everything exactly the same. But in preparation for the transporting of the items on loan from the LNPA's Cultural Center to Haverford, Adam packed the boxes with cedar and sage and explained to us that they were traditional sacred plants of the Lenape, the cedar being a traditional/historical plant of the Lenape and the sage in recognition of the different geographical locations and practices of the Lenape diaspora. The cedar and sage were how he was offering the objects spiritual care. Under "standard practice," the spiritual care of an Indigenous item is completely neglected, in part because a preservation-mindset focuses on separating the items from anything natural, whereas a connection to nature and the land are viewed as essential for protecting and safe-keeping items in Indigenous frameworks. There is overlap between preservation and safe-keeping—but they are not the same.

Focused solely on preservation, traditional institutional practices also limit access and use. Standard practice at a museum is that the item is kept in storage and restrictive policies for accessing and interacting with the item keep interaction to a minimum. These policies immobilize items meant to be in use and out in the sun and the Earth and, when coupled with limited definitions of expertise, limit access to the items by the cultural communities connected to them. As with the process of writing down stories, good preservation practices can be very valuable in isolation, but the risk is in the inflexible upholding of those policies by institutions which have not shed their narrow and Euro-centric notions of care and expertise. Without museums purging that hierarchal understanding of culture, different frameworks of care/safe-keeping and use/display do not meet as equals to be negotiated with but are instead steamrolled with institutional power and gatekeeping.

Likewise, the displaying of items in glass cases follows the same track. Displaying things in cases does help to preserve and keep the items secure from damage or theft. But even excellent curatorial design and careful selection of items does not change the fact that museum glass cases preclude certain types of engagement, such as touching, in favor of a specific visual experience that may be disconnected from the item's intended use or design. And when that disconnect goes unacknowledged by museums, it can intensify societal stereotypes about what is "good" art and limit the depth of a visitor's connection and understanding of non-Euro-American art.

Possession

Having written something down, it is easy to take possession of a story and stow it away in an obscure academic text without the proper attribution, contextualization, or community to keep that story alive.

Enduring Presence at Temple
Still from Chat Exhibit Tour
Video: Adam Waterbear DePaul

Museums do this immobilizing, decontextualizing, and recontextualizing with both stories and physical items. Often stemming from researchers or private collectors sweeping into Indigenous communities rocked by colonial violence and purchasing or otherwise taking things, the collections of museums are built on theft and the items, as Teri Greeves (Kiowa) articulated in a curator talk, can be seen as imprisoned within institutional collections.[23] Alternatively, Professor of Environmental Studies Elizabeth Hooper (Mohawk) frames museums and other cultural institutions as dragons which hoard the wealth of those they have conquered.[24]

Some proposals about how to repair this wrong have been to return possession of the items to the people who created them and will hold them in safe keeping. The "traditional" term for this is repatriation, but there is also a movement to rematriate. In the framing of Hooper, who works with institutions like the Field Museum to rematriate seeds, to rematriate to not just to return, but to reconnect.[25] It is about the development of a reciprocal relationship between Indigenous communities and institutions like the Field Museum so that the items can regain the life and motion they may have lost while solely in the care of museums. Repatriation/rematriation is, unsurprisingly, complicated on both sides of the equation. Not only are there varying levels of resistance to the idea from institutional staff and curators, but there is also no one-size-fits-all solution for the tribes and nations from whom these items have been stolen. Drastic change to the nation may have occurred since the items were taken which necessitates complicated negotiation about who has authority over a given item and who has the expertise to care for it. Also, various nations and tribes simply have different opinions concerning whether they want the items back. Tahnee Ahtone (Kiowa), Director of the Kiowa Tribal Museum, noted in an interview with Hyperallergic that the Kiowa do not want the items returned, they want access. "We're...not asking you to dump drawers and give everything back to us as Kiowas. Mainly we just want access to our items, and we want to know what you have. But we're not asking for it back. That's our own belief system. You don't disturb."[26]

Conclusion

Although this exhibit sidesteps the question of possession because the items have been temporarily loaned to Haverford by their artists, we are not relieved of other responsibilities, namely that of rebuilding and reconnecting. This exhibit is a brick laid in the path we walk together, building the relationship between the College, the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania, and other Lenape communities. I hope that this exhibit, the effort of a few key individuals, most notably Terry Snyder in the bringing this opportunity to the table, Sarah Horowitz and Bruce Bumbarger in guiding the curatorial work and writing, and Adam Waterbear DePaul who was there throughout all of this as a steady force and kind partner, gets members of the broader Haverford community interested in the rebuilding effort and brings about further growth. Despite my efforts to overcome the inertia of a stable exhibit like this, *Enduring Presence 2023* cannot actually show everyone the LNPA's evolution in motion. But in discussing the clothing, creativity, and new traditions of the LNPA, I hope that a reader or visitor can find something to spark their interest and pull them into connections not just with the art of the LNPA, but the people too.

Likewise, I hope that this essay has opened doors in reexamining how we think about the LNPA (perhaps in thinking of them at all) and has illustrated the complexity that can (unsurprisingly) be found through studying the art of the Nation. The Indigenous thinkers that have guided this essay's development have made it better and better as I have spent more time listening. To them, Adam, and everyone else who helped me in telling this story, thank you, wanishi.

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