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THE STOCKBRIDGE-MUNSEE TOTE
AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at
Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

Corinne McVeigh
B.A. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2007

Director: Dr. Margaret Lindauer,
Associate Professor and Museum Studies Coordinator, Department of Art History

Virginia Commonwealth University
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ABSTRACT

THE STOCKBRIDGE-MUNSEE TOTE AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

By Corinne McVeigh, B.A.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at
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Major Director: Dr. Margaret Lindauer,
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This thesis constructs the cultural biography of the National Museum of the American Indian's Stockbridge-Munsee tote, a twentieth-century souvenir craft, in order to examine the tote's cultural and cross-cultural associated meanings and how these associated meanings shift from one context to another. It follows the tote's history including its production, purchase, and transfer. This thesis briefly recounts the Stockbridge-Munsee Indians' history and focuses on a few examples of craft objects produced prior to the 1960s, when the Stockbridge-Munsee tote was made. Wisconsin Indian Craft, a craft cooperative formed in the 1960s, produced objects such as the Stockbridge-Munsee tote. This tote, along with seventeen other Wisconsin Indian Craft souvenirs, was purchased by the Department of the Interior Indian Arts and Crafts Board in

1964 and transferred to the National Museum of the American Indian's collection in 2000. This thesis analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of the inclusion of the Stockbridge-Munsee tote in the National Museum of the American Indian's collection. From constructing the Stockbridge-Munsee tote's cultural biography, this thesis concludes that the tote's associated meanings do not merely shift from context to context. Rather, these associated meanings build upon one another to create layers of coexisting associated meanings.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis presents the provenance and constructs the cultural biography of the National Museum of the American Indian's (NMAI) Stockbridge-Munsee tote, a twentieth-century souvenir craft. A cultural biography of an object involves detailed analysis of cultural and historical contexts. A traditional provenance records only ownership and collection history, while a cultural biography of an object discusses associated meanings and shifting associated meanings of an object as it moves from context to context. The phrase "cultural biography" was coined by anthropologist Igor Kopytoff in his essay, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process." He explains that "a culturally informed economic biography of an object would look at it as a culturally constructed entity, endowed with culturally specific meanings, and classified and reclassified into culturally constituted categories."¹ Elizabeth Edwards, Chris Gosden, and Ruth B. Phillips reiterate Kopytoff's approach: "One of the most fertile frameworks for the study of material culture during the late twentieth century has been the idea that objects have a 'social biography.'"² This approach analyzes objects "...by tracing the succession of meanings attached to them as they move across space and time."³

¹ Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 68.

² Elizabeth Edwards, Chris Gosden, and Ruth B. Phillips, *Sensible Objects: Colonialism, Museums and Material Culture*, (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 13.

³ Edwards, *Sensible Objects*, 13.

This cultural biography of the Stockbridge-Munsee tote follows the tote's history including its production by members of the Wisconsin Indian Craft cooperative, its purchase by the United States Department of Interior Indian Arts and Crafts Board, and its final transfer to the NMAI. This thesis observes how cross-cultural meaning associated with the tote shifted as the Stockbridge-Munsee tote transferred from one context to another. It also analyzes the tote's current inclusion in a museum collection. This thesis questions how and why this tote, along with seventeen other Stockbridge-Munsee craft objects created with the intention of being purchased and used, was transferred to the NMAI. It discusses the advantages and disadvantages, to multiple constituents, of the inclusion of the tote in the Museum's collection. These constituents include the Stockbridge-Munsee Band, Wisconsin Indian Craft, the NMAI, researchers, and the general public.

A "craft," as defined by art historian Howard Risatti, refers to an object created with skill and with intention: "While purpose and practical function instigate the making of craft objects, form, material, and technique are the elements necessary to bring them into being as physical, tangible things."⁴ Ruth B. Phillips, art historian and author of *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900*, uses the term "art commodity" to describe objects made for "outsiders."⁵ She also uses the term "souvenir arts" to describe a specific type of art commodity because "it references notions of memory and commemoration that have consistently been central to the meanings of these objects – and that indeed remain

⁴ Howard Risatti, *A Theory of Craft: Function and Aesthetic Expression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 60.

⁵ Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998), 4.

current today.”⁶ In this thesis, the terms “craft,” “art commodity,” and “souvenir” will be used to refer to such objects as described by Risatti and Phillips.

The Stockbridge-Munsee tote [Fig. 1] is a canvas bag with linoleum block-printed design with green and brown fish and turtles, a leather handle, metal grommets, and twine. The tote has no signature, logo, or symbol referring to the individual or group of craftspeople responsible for its production. It was made in 1964 through an arts and crafts cooperative, Wisconsin Indian Craft. Wisconsin Indian Craft was founded by members of the Wisconsin Governor’s Commission on Human Rights and the University of Wisconsin’s Art Education Extension who were interested in forming a crafts program to assist Native American tribes in promoting identity through arts and crafts while creating a source of income for their communities. Arvid E. Miller, Sr. was then the President of the Stockbridge-Munsee Band⁷ of Bowler, Wisconsin, and agreed to the establishment of an arts and crafts cooperative on the Stockbridge-Munsee reservation. Together, the Stockbridge-Munsee Band, the Art Education Extension from the University of Wisconsin, and governmental divisions like the Department of the Interior Indian Arts and Crafts Board and the Bureau of Indian Affairs facilitated the establishment of Wisconsin Indian Craft.

According to the NMAI’s records, Wisconsin Indian Craft produced and sold the tote bag in 1964 to the Department of the Interior Indian Arts and Crafts Board, and it became part of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board Headquarters collection. The Sioux Indian Museum in Rapid City,

⁶ Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 8.

⁷ Throughout this thesis, the Stockbridge-Munsee Indians will often be referred to as the Stockbridge-Munsee Band, a name used by the Stockbridge-Munsee Indians to describe themselves on their website (<http://mohican-nsn.gov/index.htm>) and in their publications (Stockbridge Munsee Community, and Mohican Nation. *Stories of Our Elders*, 1999.). The word “band” is synonymous with “tribe,” a term used by the United States government.

South Dakota, previously called the Sioux Indian Exhibit and Craft Center, has been operated by the Indian Arts and Crafts Board and might have housed the Stockbridge-Munsee tote in its collection. In 2000, the Indian Arts and Crafts Board transferred eighteen objects, including the tote, to the NMAI's permanent collection.⁸

To fully discuss the cultural and cross-cultural meanings associated with the Stockbridge-Munsee tote, this thesis briefly reviews the Stockbridge-Munsee Band's complex history beginning with the Mohican and Stockbridge Indians in eighteenth-century New York, following the movement and blending of tribes and cultures, to the establishment of the Stockbridge-Munsee Band in Bowler, Wisconsin. This thesis specifically characterizes the Stockbridge-Munsee tote in relation to Phillips's theories regarding Native American souvenir art production from *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art From the Northeast, 1700-1900*. She explains that art commodities and souvenirs from the eighteenth and nineteenth century represented a cross-cultural process resulting in the establishment, perpetuation, and complexity of Native American representation and identity.

This thesis continues Phillip's study of Native American souvenir art into the twentieth century using the Stockbridge-Munsee tote. It completes the tote's cultural biography with a critical look at its inclusion in the NMAI's collection. By analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of including the Stockbridge-Munsee tote in the NMAI's collection, this thesis will address criticism of the NMAI for not utilizing enough of its collection through exhibits and educational programming. This thesis also offers a close study of how a craft object's associated

⁸ Indian Arts and Craft Board catalog card; Linda J. Greatorex, e-mail message to the author, October 19, 2009.

meanings change according to its surrounding context, and it reveals the importance of studying craft objects in a cultural biographical manner.

No previous publications or scholarship exists about the Stockbridge-Munsee tote or other related objects; however, marketing brochures and other archival materials provide basic information detailing the history and goals of Wisconsin Indian Craft. These marketing brochures, memorandums, and letters were graciously provided by the National Archives and Records Administration – Pacific Alaska Region in Seattle, Washington, and by the Arvid E. Miller Library and Museum on the Stockbridge-Munsee reservation in Bowler, Wisconsin. A visit on September 13, 2010, to the NMAI’s Cultural Resources Center in Suitland, Maryland, provided an opportunity to examine and photograph the Stockbridge-Munsee tote and other objects including a belt, a pendant, a pin, and wall hangings from Wisconsin Indian Craft, a nineteenth-century Munsee Delaware pouch, and a nineteenth-century Stockbridge Mohican bag.

CHAPTER 1: HISTORY OF THE STOCKBRIDGE-MUNSEE BAND

To fully discuss the cultural and cross-cultural meanings associated with the Stockbridge-Munsee tote, this chapter will briefly recount the Stockbridge-Munsee Band's history beginning with the Muh-he-con-neok (Mohican or Mahican)⁹ Indians, ancestors to the Stockbridge Indians. It will recount the history of the Stockbridge Indians and Munsee Indians in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century New York and Massachusetts, following the movement and blending of tribes and cultures, to the final establishment of the Stockbridge-Munsee reservation in Bowler, Wisconsin. This chapter will also focus on a few examples of these tribes' craft objects produced prior to the 1960s, before the Wisconsin Indian Craft Stockbridge-Munsee tote was made.

The history and movement of the Stockbridge-Munsee Band is complex, and this chapter does not aim to offer a comprehensive or detailed account of the history of the Stockbridge-Munsee Band, nor does it include specific information relating to land treaties or tribal politics and relations with the United States government regarding land.¹⁰ This thesis, instead, will offer a brief history of the Stockbridge-Munsee Band including relevant topics and events to support and enhance the discussion of Native American culture, identity, and crafts and souvenir objects.

⁹ "Mohican" is the spelling used by the Stockbridge-Munsee Band on their website (<http://mohican-nsn.gov/index.htm>) and in their publications (Stockbridge Munsee Community, and Mohican Nation. *Stories of Our Elders*, 1999.), and it will be used throughout this thesis for consistency in spelling.

¹⁰ For a comprehensive account of histories including land treaties and politics see Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 1992, and Gromet, *The Munsee Indians: A History*, 2009.

Today the Stockbridge-Munsee reservation is located in Bowler, Wisconsin, and the members of this tribe can trace their histories back to multiple groups of Native American peoples – mainly Stockbridge Indians and Munsee Indians. Both bands or tribes stem from larger groups, today known as Mohicans and Lenni Lenape or Delaware, and were initially located in the northeast United States along the Hudson and Delaware Rivers.¹¹

Stockbridge-Munsee History

The Mohican's original homeland was a river-valley alongside a river they named the Mahicannituck, today known as the Hudson River. They referred to themselves as the Muh-he-con-neok, meaning The People of the Waters that Are Never Still. Over time this name changed and today is known as Mohican. The Munsee Indians, a group of Delaware Indians, originally lived in the Hudson and Delaware River valleys west of the Mohican Indians.¹²

English explorer Henry Hudson's 1609 sail through the river that now bears his name initiated interaction and communication between the Mohicans and the Europeans. The Mohicans and the Dutch began trading shortly after Hudson's travels, creating an exchange between cultures. The Mohicans traded beaver and otter furs for European goods and materials such as steel, brass, and tin,¹³ and through the seventeenth century and into the early eighteenth century the Mohicans continued this trade through alternating periods of peace and war with

¹¹ Dorothy W. Davids, *Brief History of the Mohican Nation, Stockbridge-Munsee Band* (Bowler, WI: Stockbridge-Munsee Historical Committee, Arvid E. Miller Memorial Library Museum, 2001), 1-2.

¹² James Warren Oberly, *A Nation of Statesmen: The Political Culture of the Stockbridge-Munsee Mohicans, 1815-1972* (Civilization of the American Indian series, vol. 252. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 5.

¹³ Patrick Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 3, 13.

neighboring tribes such as the Mohawks or among the Dutch, English, and French. European diseases including smallpox, measles, and tuberculosis, along with the consumption of alcohol, affected the Mohicans, contributing to death and a decline in their population. Simultaneously, the Mohicans slowly lost land as European populations increased. These social, economic, and health changes “cause[d] a breakdown in their traditional Mohican life and beliefs.”¹⁴ The Mohicans also became a culture less invested with hunting and more reliant on the Europeans for trade.

In addition to these many changes, the Mohicans allowed Christian missionary John Sergeant to live with them in their village of Wnahktukuk in 1734, in current-day Massachusetts, to preach Christianity and convert and baptize those interested in this new religion. Sergeant established a Christian mission with a church and a school in the village of Wnahktukuk, changing the name to Stockbridge, Massachusetts, in 1738, and the Mohicans and other Native Americans who chose to live in Stockbridge were then referred to as Stockbridge Indians.¹⁵

After the French and Indian Wars and the Revolutionary War, European settlers continued to encroach on the Stockbridge Indians’ land until the settlers ultimately forced them out of Stockbridge. In the mid-1780s many Stockbridge Indians moved west to central New York to live with the Oneida, establishing New Stockbridge.¹⁶ Again, American and European settlers inhabited the Stockbridge Indians’ land and some of the tribal members traveled to Indiana Territory, which included the current states of Ohio and Indiana, to live with the

¹⁴ Davids, *Brief History of the Mohican Nation, Stockbridge-Munsee Band*, 3.

¹⁵ Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 4-37; Davids, *Brief History of the Mohican Nation, Stockbridge-Munsee Band*, 2-3.

¹⁶ Davids, *Brief History of the Mohican Nation, Stockbridge-Munsee Band*, 3; Oberly, *A Nation of Statesmen*, 19.

Delaware, Munsee, and Miami Indians. In the 1820s, Stockbridge tribal members made the difficult journey from New Stockbridge to the Green Bay area. Along the way, some settled in Kansas and Oklahoma.¹⁷ In the 1830s, groups of Munsee Indians arrived in Wisconsin from Canada and were welcomed to live with the Stockbridge Indians, forming the community named the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of the Mohican Nation.¹⁸ Yet another move occurred after the Treaty of 1856 in which individual tribal members were allotted land on a new reservation. The Stockbridge Indians and Munsee Indians were relocated to Shawano County, Wisconsin, to establish a reservation in Bowler. During this final move, Stockbridge Indians and Munsee Indians from Wisconsin, Kansas, and New York joined together to establish a new community, one that remains in Bowler today.¹⁹

Since the relocation to Shawano County in 1856, the Stockbridge-Munsee Band has worked to establish its community and maintain an independent culture: “Even though our people have been in close contact with European civilization for more than 300 years, we still remain as an identifiable group.”²⁰ For example, Arvid E. Miller, elected Tribal Chairman in 1939, encouraged Stockbridge-Munsee Indians and neighboring tribes to participate in pan-tribal organizations and movements. He attended the very first meeting of the National Congress of American Indians in 1944, and he sent representatives to the 1961 American Indian Conference in Chicago. He also founded the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council in 1966, leading the first formal gathering of Wisconsin tribes since the 1820s. Miller was an active member of the

¹⁷ Davids, *Brief History of the Mohican Nation, Stockbridge-Munsee Band*, 4.

¹⁸ Oberly, *A Nation of Statesmen*, 25-55.

¹⁹ Oberly, *A Nation of Statesmen*, 88-91.

²⁰ Oberly, *A Nation of Statesmen*, 187.

Stockbridge-Munsee council for twenty-six years, serving as chair beginning in 1939, encouraging self-governance within his community. Bernice Miller, Arvid E. Miller's wife, was the chair of the Stockbridge-Munsee council's Arts and Crafts Committee, and Arvid and Bernice Miller helped to establish Wisconsin Indian Craft, a craft cooperative which will be discussed with detail in Chapter 2.²¹

Native American Crafts Prior to 1960s

In order to construct the Stockbridge-Munsee tribe's cultural biography, earlier Native American craft examples must be examined in order to build an understanding of the history of Native American souvenir production. In *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art From the Northeast, 1700-1900*, art historian Ruth B. Phillips explains that Native American art commodities and souvenirs from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries represented a cross-cultural process resulting in the establishment, perpetuation, and complexity of Native American representation and identity. Phillips explores a cultural and social perspective in her study of Native American crafts, specifically in the northeastern United States neighboring the Great Lakes. Although she does not focus on Mohican Indians in her book, Phillips includes neighboring tribes such as the Oneida and the Mohawk, tribes that lived in the same geographical areas and at the same time as the Stockbridge Indians. She considers reasons for Native souvenir production, why tourists collected these crafts, and how identity, representation, and stereotypes were established, perpetuated, and distorted through the production of souvenir arts and the exchange between Native Americans and European and American consumers. For example, Phillips explains:

²¹ Oberly, *A Nation of Statesmen*, 186-201.

It is not a mere art-historical accident that at the very moment game and land-based subsistence resources were disappearing under the impact of farming, industrialization, and urbanization, the most common vignettes in moosehair embroidery were a woman picking berries or fruit, eternally and effortlessly harvesting the bounty of nature, and a man with a gun or bow and arrow shooting an unending supply of rabbits and birds.²²

Phillips also discusses the shifts in ethnographic collecting from the eighteenth century through the twentieth century, and she explains the reasons for the decline of souvenir crafts in the twentieth century. From 1700-1900 Native American craft production responded to tourists' demand for souvenirs and mementos.²³ These crafts often imitated ceremonial and decorative objects but were made specifically for sale to tourists. Mohican and Munsee Indians traditionally crafted woven baskets for storage containers but also made embroidered and beaded objects such as bags and pouches.²⁴ Examples of beaded and embroidered bags include a Munsee Delaware pouch circa 1870 [Fig. 2] and a Stockbridge Mohican bag circa 1840 [Fig. 3]. Tourists collected these items to remember their travels and to own something authentic or exotic, and anthropologists collected to salvage a presumed fading culture.²⁵ This exchange between Native American craft producers and European and American consumers created what Phillips terms a “transcultural process”:

On the one hand, the logic of consumerism encouraged the fixing of iconographic and generic types: good ‘product recognition’ favored static, simplistic imagery. On the other hand, the exchanges themselves were inherently dynamic, continually destabilizing the stereotypes by stimulating new appropriative acts that threatened, in turn, to blur the outlines of otherness that defined each of the parties involved.²⁶

²² Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 136.

²³ Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 3.

²⁴ Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 22.

²⁵ Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 4-8.

²⁶ Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 10.

Collectors and tourists wanted objects that reflected their concept and image of the Native American culture, which compelled Native Americans to match this demand while simultaneously adopting patterns and designs from European culture. Additionally, American women adopted beading techniques used by many Native American groups when decorating bags and shoes, seen in the nineteenth-century Munsee Delaware pouch and the nineteenth-century Stockbridge Mohican bag. Books and magazines such as *The Lady's Newspaper* offered instructions to replicate this Native American technique.²⁷ This back-and-forth exchange of design, skill, and style fueled changes in identity and culture. Anthropologist Christina F. Kreps describes this cultural exchange as a “cultural hybridization” or fluid “site of cultural interaction.”²⁸ For example, Mohican Indians at Stockbridge were urged to adopt Christianity; learn to read, write, and speak English; and live in an English style village with an English style government, yet they also successfully maintained an independent Indian identity and culture.

Compared to the elaborately embellished bags, the 1964 Stockbridge-Munsee tote appears disconnected from past Native American crafts and souvenirs. The embroidered and beaded crafts were most common, however, a few atypical early Stockbridge Indian examples also exist and provide a history and precedent for the Wisconsin Indian Craft tote. For example, throughout the Stockbridge-Munsee Indians' past, woven baskets were popular objects. Most were constructed without decoration. Some, however, were decorated with stamped designs. A Stockbridge Mohican splint basket [Fig. 4] collected from the Stockbridge reservation in New York, made between the mid-1700s and early 1800s, has potato-stamped foliage applied to the

²⁷ For an image, refer to “Pattern for a ‘Bag in American Indian Bead-work.’” Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 218. Fig. 6.16.

²⁸ Christina F Kreps, *Liberating Culture: Cross-cultural Perspectives on Museums, Curation, and Heritage Preservation* (London: Routledge, 2003), 14-15.

surface of the wood in a repeated pattern. A small Stockbridge Mohican woven bag [Fig. 5], made in 1890 by Stockbridge Mohican Sarah Miller in Wisconsin, was decorated with paint applied directly to the surface instead of with ornate beading or embroidery. Both of these examples have the design and imagery applied to the surface of the object rather than a design intricately sewn onto the materials. Perhaps this difference in technique suggests that the splint basket and small woven bag were produced solely and specifically for consumers and were produced quickly and inexpensively. The beaded and embroidered bags may have been made for both tourists and for tribal members, and the stamped and painted objects would not have been kept by tribal members for personal use. Crafters could produce the stamped objects very quickly, and in a routine manner, thus creating a more uniform product with less skill and concentration than needed for the embroidery and beading. The Stockbridge-Munsee tote made by members of Wisconsin Indian Craft reflects a technique and design seen in the earlier stamped and painted crafts. The fish and turtles were applied to the surface of the canvas using linoleum stamps, like the potato stamps used on the aforementioned Stockbridge basket, in a repeated pattern. Bags could be produced quickly and inexpensively while still offering an attractive and decorated craft.

Like its technique, the subject-matter of the Stockbridge-Munsee tote can be traced to earlier craft examples by the imagery printed on it. The stamped design on the Stockbridge-Munsee tote includes fish and turtles, animals that reflect Native American origin stories and animals that are represented in earlier craft examples. An example of the fish motif is found in a Mohican war club, circa 1750, [Fig. 6] from Massachusetts. It was carved into the shape of a fish, probably a sturgeon. The turtle appears in Munsee Indian origin stories, such as the *Mud Diver Story*. In this story, animals living in a water-covered world attempt to retrieve mud from

below the water. After several animals fail, the Muskrat succeeds in returning with mud but dies during his journey. Because of his sacrifice the other animals are able to place mud on the back of Turtle, building an island that becomes the Earth.²⁹

Native American craft and souvenir production declined during the twentieth century as industrially made objects and imitations increased. Beginning in the 1930s, however, the United States government encouraged craft studios and programs on reservations to stimulate handmade crafts as a way to preserve Native American traditions.³⁰ These topics, among others, will be explored with detail in Chapter 2.

²⁹ Robert Steven Grumet, *The Munsee Indians: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), 24; Evan T. Pritchard, *Native American Stories of the Sacred: Retold and Annotated* (Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths Pub, 2005), 2-11.

³⁰ Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 262-264.

CHAPTER 2: INDIAN ARTS AND CRAFTS BOARD AND WISCONSIN INDIAN CRAFT

Before discussing Wisconsin Indian Craft, the craft cooperative responsible for the production of objects such as the Stockbridge-Munsee tote, it is necessary to focus on the history, formation, and goals of the Department of the Interior Indian Arts and Crafts Board and its role in regulating and promoting Native American arts and crafts. This chapter will accordingly focus on Wisconsin Indian Craft and the primary parties involved in its founding: the University of Wisconsin, the Stockbridge-Munsee Band, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Indian Arts and Crafts Board.

Indian Arts and Crafts Board

A significant piece of the Stockbridge-Munsee tote's cultural biography involves the Department of the Interior Indian Arts and Crafts Board because of its role in the creation of craft cooperatives and its role as a collector and promoter of Native American crafts through its three museums: the Sioux Indian Museum, the Museum of the Plains Indian, and the Southern Plains Indian Museum. The Indian Arts and Crafts Board grew out of the United States Government's desire to financially support Native American culture and business ventures in craft production.

Native American crafts were traded and collected as souvenirs beginning with early explorers and ventures such as the Lewis and Clark expedition from 1804-06 and through the

Civil War from 1861-65.³¹ Native American crafts were collected into the late 1800s as fashionable commodities. The Arts and Crafts Movement in the late 1800s in England and the United States generated interest in handmade objects, as the movement reacted against industrialization, machine-made goods, and mass production. Native American crafts met consumers' demands for high quality, handmade, and unique objects. Those who believed the Native American culture was vanishing also collected Native American objects and crafts. Collectors such as George G. Heye, whose collection, in part, is now managed by the National Museum of the American Indian and will be discussed in Chapter 3, collected ethnographic objects and Native American remains through excavations and expeditions intended to preserve indigenous cultures.³²

An interest in Native American crafts continued in the United States into the 1930s and 40s with the inclusion of Native American objects in museum exhibitions and international fairs, yet Native Americans relying on the income from crafts were not profiting. Most Native American communities had relied on farming as a way of life but with limited workable land, the need to profit from crafts and art objects became more important. Native American crafts, however, were selling for less: "When the Navajo could sell their blankets and rugs in 1931, they were getting less than the already low prices paid a year earlier."³³ The Great Depression only worsened the economic status of many Native American communities. Museum exhibitions such

³¹ Ira Jacknis, "A New Thing? The National Museum of the American Indian in Historical and Institutional Context," in *The National Museum of the American Indian: Critical Conversations*, ed. Amy Lonetree and Amanda J. Cobb. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 4.

³² Jacknis, "A New Thing?" 8-9.

³³ Schrader, *The Indian Arts and Crafts Board*, 45.

as the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Mexican Indian art exhibition in 1930, an exhibition of American Indian art at Grand Central Galleries in 1931, and the Museum of Modern Art's *Indian Art of the United States* in 1941, helped to raise public interest in Native American crafts. Fairs and festivals such as the Exposition of Indian Tribal Arts in 1931, Chicago's A Century of Progress International Exposition of 1933-34, the Golden Gate International Exposition at San Francisco in 1939, along with the selling of Native American jewelry and housewares like pottery and rugs at a New York Macy's department store further encouraged the arts and crafts market.³⁴

The market for Native American crafts also became saturated with imitations and crafts of poorer quality. Many craft objects were being falsely sold in markets such as the Maisel Trading Post Company of Albuquerque, New Mexico, as Native American handmade crafts. Many of these "Indian-made" crafts sold at this trading post were machine made.³⁵ With the exploitation of Native Americans crafts, many efforts, plans, and congressional bills attempted to authenticate Native American-made crafts, penalize those creating false reproductions, promote and market Native American crafts, establish programs and craft studios on reservations, and offer additional instruction on handcrafts. Examples include the Indian Cooperative Marketing Board bill of 1930, a bill that proposed the formation of a board to oversee the promotion, sales, and authentication of Native American crafts³⁶ and the Public Works of Art Project of 1933, an effort, lasting only one year, that commissioned Native American craftsmen from New Mexico

³⁴ Robert Fay Schrader, *The Indian Arts and Crafts Board: An Aspect of New Deal Indian Policy* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983), 42, 50, 78, 82-83, 163.

³⁵ Schrader, *The Indian Arts and Crafts Board*, 53-56.

³⁶ Schrader, *The Indian Arts and Crafts Board*, 31.

to decorate local public buildings with pottery, rugs, and murals.³⁷ Many efforts failed or made little progress due to unavailable budgets or lack of government support. In 1935, Congress eventually organized the Indian Arts and Crafts Board as part of the New Deal Indian Policy³⁸ with the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1935:

To promote the development of Indian arts and crafts and to create a board to assist therein, and for other purposes. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That a board is hereby created in the Department of the Interior to be known as "Indian Arts and Crafts Board", and hereinafter referred to as the Board. It shall be the function and the duty of the Board to promote the economic welfare of Indian tribes and the Indian wards of the Government through the development of Indian arts and crafts and the expansion of the market for the products of Indian art and craftsmanship.³⁹

Today, the Indian Arts and Crafts Board serves:

To promote the economic development of American Indians and Alaska Natives through the expansion of the Indian arts and crafts market. A top priority of the IACB is the implementation and enforcement of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990, a truth-in-advertising law that provides criminal and civil penalties for marketing products as 'Indian-made' when such products are not made by Indians, as defined by the Act.⁴⁰

The Indian Arts and Crafts Board assisted in the establishment of studios and craft cooperatives on Native American reservations throughout the United States beginning in the mid 1930s. In its brochure, *Forming An Arts and Crafts Cooperative*, the Indian Arts and Crafts Board defines a cooperative as "a business that is collectively owned and controlled by the people who use its services." The brochure also states that, "Cooperatives promote business operation in a socially

³⁷ Schrader, *The Indian Arts and Crafts Board*, 79-80.

³⁸ Schrader, *The Indian Arts and Crafts Board*, xi – 20.

³⁹ "Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1935," U.S. Department of the Interior Indian Arts and Crafts Board, accessed October 23, 2010, <http://www.doi.gov/iacb/iaca35.html>.

⁴⁰ "Indian Arts and Crafts Board Mission," U.S. Department of the Interior Indian Arts and Crafts Board, accessed October 3, 2009, <http://www.doi.gov/iacb/mission.html>.

and ethically responsible manner, staying true to cultural values through an open and collective style of governance.”⁴¹

By coordinating and organizing arts and crafts cooperatives, the Indian Arts and Crafts Board also encouraged Native American communities to establish their own clubs and guilds.

Historian Robert Fay Schrader describes the importance of craft cooperatives:

When tribes began to feel a new confidence in their tribal future and in the future of their arts and crafts, they used the cooperative as a vehicle for voluntary economic organization. In Nevada, Washoes, Paiutes, and Shoshones organized in late 1935 the Wa-Pai-Shone Craftsmen, a cooperative trading post that was established permanently under Nevada law in 1936. Cooperatives were destined to play an ever increasing role in the preservation of Indian arts and crafts.⁴²

Other community clubs and programs included the Navajo Arts and Crafts Guild of New Mexico and Arizona, the Seminole Crafts Guild in Florida, the Pueblo Handicrafts Market in New Mexico, and the Kateria Club of Idaho.⁴³

Members of many of these craft programs were producing craft objects that reflected traditional Native American styles and objects while also experimenting with new skills and materials. While working with the Choctaw Indians in Oklahoma, for example, the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, “decided to promote the making of homespun yarn as a home industry, a craft which would provide the workers with an opportunity to develop a skill and at the same time achieve a style of their own.”⁴⁴ Craft cooperatives were enabling Native American communities to reclaim a sense of identity through handcrafts while creating a profitable business and market.

⁴¹ “Forming An Arts and Crafts Cooperative,” Indian Arts and Crafts Board brochure.

⁴² Schrader, *The Indian Arts and Crafts Board*, 208.

⁴³ Schrader, *The Indian Arts and Crafts Board*, 215-221.

⁴⁴ Schrader, *The Indian Arts and Crafts Board*, 208-209.

Wisconsin Indian Craft

Wisconsin Indian Craft was a craft cooperative that produced Native American souvenir crafts on the Stockbridge-Munsee Band's reservation from 1964 until the early 1980s. It was founded by Tom Miglautsch, James Schinneller, and Arvid E. Miller in 1964. Miglautsch, a member of the Wisconsin Governor's Commission on Human Rights, and Schinneller, from the University of Wisconsin's Art Education Extension, approached the Great Lakes Inter-tribal Council, a group of Wisconsin Tribes. Miglautsch and Schinneller proposed the formation of an Indian crafts program to assist Native American tribes in promoting identity through arts and crafts while creating a source of income for their communities. Arvid E. Miller accepted the proposition. Miller was the President of the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Bowler, Wisconsin, and also a member of the Wisconsin Governor's Commission on Human Rights.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), another section of the Interior Department, "approved a \$12,000 loan from Credit to pay for materials, equipment, and supplies"⁴⁵ for Wisconsin Indian Craft. BIA was established in 1824,⁴⁶ and like the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, it strives to aid Native American tribes through financial support. BIA assists in areas such as education, natural resources, and economics. Its current mission is to "... enhance the quality of life, to promote economic opportunity, and to carry out the responsibility to protect and improve the trust assets of American Indians, Indian tribes, and Alaska Natives."⁴⁷ Along

⁴⁵ Robert G. Hart, "Stockbridge Munsee craft program," January 23, 1964, memo to Indian Arts and Crafts Board staff members.

⁴⁶ "Who We Are," US Department of the Interior Indian Affairs, accessed September 7, 2010, <http://www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre/index.htm>.

⁴⁷ "What We Do," US Department of the Interior Indian Affairs, accessed September 7, 2010, <http://www.bia.gov/WhatWeDo/index.htm>.

with the loan from Indian Affairs, the University of Wisconsin also provided the Stockbridge-Munsee Band with a grant of \$1,500 to finance training workshops and marketing materials for Wisconsin Indian Craft.⁴⁸

In 1964, the project hosted four weeklong workshops in which tribal members, mostly women, were trained by Wisconsin craftsmen and professors from the University of Wisconsin's Art Extension Division in handcrafts such as block printing, weaving, silverwork, and woodwork.⁴⁹ Dorothy Holler, one of the contracted teachers, taught block printing, and members created both tote bags and wall hangings. Other objects that people made included woven belts and silver brooches, pins, earrings, and cufflinks.⁵⁰

The tribe created a craft studio on its reservation, and members began selling their handiworks about a year after their initial training workshop. This community-based cooperative created commercial objects. These souvenir crafts were intended to be used, and Wisconsin Indian Craft sold their crafts on the Stockbridge-Munsee reservation, took orders by mail request, and a tribal member who traveled with samples also accepted commissions. Tribal member Bernice Miller elaborates, "Although we never did make a lot of money, we kept the shop going until 1982 before it closed out completely."⁵¹ Librarian and museum specialist Leah Miller states, "I have a couple [totes] myself that are dear to me."⁵² These crafts were made for purchase, made for Natives and non-Natives, and they represent the cultural heritage of the

⁴⁸ James A. Schinneller, January 9, 1964, letter to Robert G. Hart.

⁴⁹ Western Arts Association Bulletin, November, 1963.

⁵⁰ James A. Schinneller, January 9, 1964, letter to Robert G. Hart; Leah J. Miller, e-mail message to the author, October 29, 2009.

⁵¹ Leah J. Miller, e-mail message to the author, October 29, 2009.

⁵² Leah J. Miller, e-mail message to the author, October 29, 2009.

Stockbridge-Munsee Band. A connection between history, craft, visual representation, and story is expressed in a poem written by Juanita Hofstrom, a Wisconsin Indian Craft weaver. In the poem she references the “print of wood on cloth” and “the moss-backed turtle,” and she indicates that the tribal history and stories are “for your own walls to hold” through the purchasing of crafts such as totes, wall hangings, and jewelry.⁵³

The Stockbridge-Munsee’s local cultural center, the Arvid E. Miller Library and Museum, now houses the linoleum blocks created and used by Wisconsin Indian Craft, along with some of the bags and wall hangings. The local tribal museum acts as “the official depository for the public records of the Mohican Nation, Stockbridge-Munsee Band. Our primary goal is to preserve our history and culture for tribal members and the general public.”⁵⁴ The Stockbridge-Munsee library and museum allows the tribe to control, maintain, and develop its own cultural heritage, while the library also houses books, manuscripts, correspondence, maps, microfilm, microfiche, scrapbooks, photographs, video tapes, and language tapes.

Associated Meanings

According to the NMAI’s records, Wisconsin Indian Craft produced and sold the Stockbridge-Munsee tote bag, among other craft objects, in 1964 to the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, and it became part of the collection of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board Headquarters. The Indian Arts and Crafts Board cares for over 11,000 objects and manages three museums:

⁵³ “Crafts by the Wisconsin Indians: Stockbridge Munsee Tribe – Bowler, Wisconsin,” Wisconsin Indian Craft brochure.

⁵⁴ “Arvid E. Miller Library/Museum,” Stockbridge-Munsee Community Band of Mohican Indians, accessed October 14, 2009, <http://mohican-nsn.gov/Departments/Library-Museum/index.htm>.

The Sioux Indian Museum in Rapid City, South Dakota, the Museum of the Plains Indian in Browning, Montana, and the Southern Plains Indian Museum in Anadarko, Oklahoma.⁵⁵ Under the Indian Arts and Crafts Board's management, these museums continue to promote contemporary Native American arts and crafts. For example, the Sioux Museum was established in 1939 and hosts promotional exhibitions of contemporary arts and crafts, displayed and available for purchase, along with exhibits featuring traditional objects such as weapons, toys, and housewares.⁵⁶ In 2000, the Indian Arts and Crafts Board transferred eighteen Wisconsin Indian Craft objects, including the Stockbridge-Munsee tote, from its collection to the NMAI's permanent collection, and these objects are now stored in the Cultural Resources Center in Suitland, Maryland.

As the Stockbridge-Munsee tote moved from context to context, associated meanings also shifted. The shifting associated meanings include the following:

1. The Stockbridge-Munsee tote is a product of a government-assisted craft cooperative, purchased by the Interior Department Indian Arts and Crafts Board.
2. The Stockbridge-Munsee tote is an expression of modern Stockbridge-Munsee identity and culture created through Wisconsin Indian Craft.
3. The Stockbridge-Munsee tote is a reference to the rise in Native American ownership and authority of the 1960s and 1970s through the American Indian Movement and the Red Power Movement.

1. The Stockbridge-Munsee tote is a product of a government-assisted craft cooperative, a cooperative modeled after the many craft programs initiated by the Indian Arts and Crafts Board

⁵⁵ "Preserving Our Legacy," Department of the Interior Museum Management Program, accessed September 7, 2010, <http://www.doi.gov/museum/index.html>.

⁵⁶ "Indian Arts and Craft Board Museums," U.S. Department of the Interior Indian Arts and Crafts Board, accessed September 7, 2010, http://www.doi.gov/iacb/museums/general_museum.html.

beginning in the mid 1930s. This period of the tote's cultural biography reveals the government's involvement and role in the rise of Native American craft programs on reservations and in contributing to the growth of a market for Native American crafts. In addition to the department's help in organizing craft cooperatives, the Indian Arts and Crafts Board could be criticized for its paternalistic manner. It was organized because of a desire to protect Native Americans in their commercial ventures with arts and crafts, creating a sense that Native Americans needed this assistance to succeed. Schrader suggests that the Indian Arts and Crafts Board was acting to continue the "responsibility of the U.S. as guardian of the Indians."⁵⁷ On the contrary, many Native American groups requested government assistance in regulating, protecting, and marketing crafts.⁵⁸

In a 1964 letter from Schinneller, one of the organizers of Wisconsin Indian Craft from the University of Wisconsin's Art Education Extension, to Mr. Robert G. Hart, then General Manager for the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, Schinneller explained that improvised designs and crafts were used because the Stockbridge-Munsee cooperative participants lacked specific traditional skills such as rug weaving or beadwork. He also described the Wisconsin Indian Craft brochure, used to market and advertise the Stockbridge-Munsee venture, as having a "romantic" feeling. Schinneller uses the term "romantic" to suggest that the brochure's style and appearance perpetuates a stereotypical representation of Native American culture or identity. It is important to consider this perpetuation of a presumed exotic culture because it represents a portion of the continuing complex cultural-hybridization or transcultural process, described by Ruth B. Phillips. The Indian Arts and Crafts Board and the University of Wisconsin's Art Education

⁵⁷ Schrader, *The Indian Arts and Crafts Board*, 77.

⁵⁸ Schrader, *The Indian Arts and Crafts Board*, 45.

Extension worked in collaboration with the Stockbridge-Munsee Indians to develop Wisconsin Indian Craft, exemplifying a back-and-forth exchange involving certain past stereotypical views and present attempts to express contemporary Native American culture and identity.

The Indian Arts and Crafts Board not only organized craft cooperatives and instructed tribes on establishing studios and shops on their reservations, but the Indian Arts and Crafts Board also became consumers of these products. The Board purchased souvenir crafts, including the Stockbridge-Munsee tote, from Wisconsin Indian Craft to house in its own collection. The Board collected craft objects to display in its museums to further increase the public's interest and awareness of Native American crafts, while expanding the market for these objects.

2. The Stockbridge-Munsee tote is an expression of modern Stockbridge-Munsee identity and culture created through Wisconsin Indian Craft. During Wisconsin Indian Craft, tribal member Edwin Martin designed the Stockbridge-Munsee tribal symbol, and members of his family continue to work with silver to create jewelry and other crafts. The symbol he created, Many Trails, represents the tribe's endurance, strength, and hope, and Wisconsin Indian Craft members produced crafts with the symbol, such as the Stockbridge-Munsee pendant [Fig. 7].⁵⁹ This symbol is recognized as a representation of the complex history and difficult journey of the Mohican culture. Wisconsin Indian Craft encouraged tribal members to express identity and culture. For example, it offered Martin the opportunity to establish a symbol for his community, representing the Stockbridge-Munsee Band's history and future. The craft cooperative enabled members to express their modern identity with the Stockbridge-Munsee tote's fish and turtle motifs referencing the *Mud Diver Story* and with pendants symbolizing the Stockbridge-Munsee

⁵⁹ "Community," Stockbridge-Munsee Community Band of Mohican Indians, accessed October 14, 2009, <http://mohican-nsn.gov/Community/index.htm>.

Band's history and future.

3. The Stockbridge-Munsee tote is a reference to the rise in Native American ownership and authority of the 1960s-1980s through the American Indian Movement and the Red Power Movement. Increased community guilds, clubs, and craft cooperatives promoted self-governance and authority. The Native American social movements were perhaps fueled in part by the increased confidence and cultural pride created by programs like Wisconsin Indian Craft. The American Indian Movement was founded in 1968 and raised awareness of Native American civil injustices and poverty through protests, and it promoted Native American cultural pride. The Red Power Movement also encouraged Native Americans to demand control of their representation.⁶⁰ As a result of these social movements, the Indian Arts and Crafts Association was established in 1974 “to promote, preserve and protect authentic Native American arts and crafts,”⁶¹ and the American Indian Religious Freedom Act was passed in 1978:

On and after August 11, 1978, it shall be the policy of the United States to protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise the traditional religions of the American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, and Native Hawaiians, including but not limited to access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonials and traditional rites.⁶²

⁶⁰ Jacknis, “A New Thing?” 21.

⁶¹ “Indian Arts and Crafts Association,” accessed October 29, 2009, <http://www.iaca.com/>.

⁶² Kreps, *Liberating Culture*, 101; “American Indian Religious Freedom Act,” National Park Service, accessed October 22, 2010, www.nps.gov/history/local-law/fhpl_indianrelfreact.pdf

Before this act was passed, it was illegal for Native Americans to worship publicly and freely. Also at this time, literature by influential Native American figures such as Black Elk was republished, gaining attention and influencing the current civil rights movements.⁶³

Conclusion

This study of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board and Wisconsin Indian Craft analyzes associated meanings of the Stockbridge-Munsee tote, explaining how associated meanings shift from context to context and how multiple layers of associated meaning build upon one another. The tote is a product of a government-assisted cooperative, as well as a symbol of a successful program that encouraged tribal identity. Wisconsin Indian Craft was developed to preserve arts and crafts skills and promote awareness of a community's cultural heritage, along with supplying a source of income and promoting identity. The tote reminds Stockbridge-Munsee Band members of this period of expression and productivity, while the tote was also purchased and collected by the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, the department responsible for the encouragement and organization of craft cooperatives.

⁶³ Pritchard, *Native American Stories of the Sacred*, xxxv.

CHAPTER 3: THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

This chapter will briefly review the NMAI's collecting history and mission and why eighteen objects from the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, including the Stockbridge-Munsee tote, were transferred to the NMAI in 2000. It will focus on the advantages and disadvantages of the inclusion of the Stockbridge-Munsee tote in the NMAI's collection to multiple constituents. These constituents include the Stockbridge-Munsee Band, Wisconsin Indian Craft, the NMAI, researchers, and the general public. This chapter will also address criticism of the NMAI including issues such as not utilizing enough of its collection through exhibits and educational programming. Much of the NMAI's collection is kept in its collections storage and research facility in Suitland, Maryland, instead of on view at its museum site in Washington, DC.

Collecting History and Mission

George Gustav Heye, collector of indigenous cultures, acquired Native American objects including crafts, ethnographic objects, and ceremonial objects, beginning in the late nineteenth century. Through excavations, donations, and expeditions, Heye's collection grew to include more than 800,000 objects. With this collection, Heye opened the Museum of the American Indian in New York, which operated from 1922-1956 and presented an authoritative account based in colonialist ideas of exploration, conquest, and disappearance.⁶⁴ He intended it to serve

⁶⁴ Jacknis, "A New Thing?" 6.

as an anthropological institution to study and preserve Native American objects and remains. Because of the decline in trustee funding during World War II, Heye laid off nearly all staff members in the curatorial department responsible for research, causing the museum's academic activity and reputation to wane.⁶⁵

During the 1960s and 1970s, Native Americans began to demand self-representation, and civil rights movements such as the American Indian Movement contributed to the discussions that led to NMAI's creation. Heye's collection of American Indian objects was one of the NMAI's founding collections after Congress passed the NMAI Act (PL 101-185) November 28, 1989.⁶⁶ In 1989, Heye's collection was transferred to the Smithsonian Institution.⁶⁷ The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 also influenced Native American control of museum collections concerning sacred materials and human remains:

NAGPRA provides a process for museums and Federal agencies to return certain Native American cultural items -- human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony -- to lineal descendants, Indian tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations.⁶⁸

The NMAI opened to the public in 2004, and it presents multiple viewpoints rather than objectifying American Indian cultures through the display of de-contextualized sacred and ethnographic objects as Heye's original collection and museum had presented. This shift is

⁶⁵ Jacknis, "A New Thing?" 3-15.

⁶⁶ Patricia Pierce Erikson, "Decolonizing the 'Nation's Attic,': The National Museum of the American Indian and the Politics of Knowledge-Making in a National Space," in *The National Museum of the American Indian: Critical Conversations*, ed. Amy Lonetree. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 63.

⁶⁷ Jacknis, "A New Thing?" 20-21.

⁶⁸ "National NAGPRA," National Park Service, accessed October 24, 2010, <http://www.nps.gov/nagpra>.

reflected in the NMAI's 1990 mission statement:

The National Museum of the American Indian shall recognize and affirm to Native communities and the non-Native public the historical and contemporary culture and cultural achievements of the Natives of the Western Hemisphere by advancing – in consultation, collaboration, and cooperation with Natives – knowledge and understanding of Native cultures, including art, history, and language, and by recognizing the museum's special responsibility, through innovative public programming, research and collections, to protect, support, and enhance the development, maintenance, and perpetuation of Native culture and community.⁶⁹

The current and condensed mission statement, found on the NMAI's website, reads:

The National Museum of the American Indian is committed to advancing knowledge and understanding of the Native cultures of the Western Hemisphere, past, present, and future, through partnership with Native people and others. The museum works to support the continuance of culture, traditional values, and transitions in contemporary Native life.⁷⁰

As part of the Smithsonian Institute, the NMAI is federally funded and serves a national audience in Washington, D.C. It receives several million visitors a year,⁷¹ both Natives and non-Natives, U.S. tourists, and foreign visitors. According to the NMAI's mission, the Museum encourages the recognition and understanding of Native culture, and the Museum is challenging past social injustices and Eurocentric readings of Native history. Michael Heyman, Smithsonian Secretary from 1994 - 1999, stated at the opening of the George Gustav Heye Center in New York, "The [NMAI] exhibitions challenge the traditional stance of the museum as the singular

⁶⁹ Sonya Atalay, "No Sense of the Struggle: Creating a Context for Survivance at the National Museum of the American Indian," in *The National Museum of the American Indian: Critical Conversations*, ed. Amy Lonetree. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 270.

⁷⁰ "About the National Museum of the American Indian: Mission Statement," National Museum of the American Indian, accessed October 14, 2010, <http://www.nmai.si.edu/subpage.cfm?subpage=about>.

⁷¹ Atalay, "No Sense of the Struggle," 268.

voice of authority on excellence and cultural meaning.”⁷² The NMAI exhibits do not represent a clear, linear perspective. Instead some of the exhibits expand in a circular form, rotating around a common theme, and these exhibits represent multiple tribes and viewpoints rather than a generalized or stereotyped view of Native Americans.⁷³ The Museum reflects changes in Native American representation and control of identity in its emphasis on culture and Native American involvement in exhibitions. The NMAI shifted from Heye’s object-centered Museum of American Indian to an educationally- and conceptually-based museum, leaving objects like the Stockbridge-Munsee tote in storage.

Transfer of Stockbridge-Munsee Tote

In 2000, eighteen Wisconsin Indian Craft objects were transferred to the NMAI from the Interior Indian Arts and Crafts Board. These objects included the Stockbridge-Munsee tote, wall hangings, woven belts, and silver accessories made in the 1960s. The NMAI’s mission is comprehensive and acts as an umbrella, covering many areas of collecting, research, education, and the Museum’s responsibilities to the public. The Stockbridge-Munsee tote, when considering the NMAI’s mission, represents a small and specific group of Native Americans active in craft production in Wisconsin in the 1960s through the early 1980s, influenced by political endeavors lead by the Indian Arts and Crafts Board and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The tote and its cultural biography help promote this specific portion of Native American culture – efforts to renew and promote crafts, a continuing cross-cultural exchange between Native Americans and American, and the move towards Native American self-confidence and cultural pride. The

⁷² Erikson, “Decolonizing the ‘Nation’s Attic,’” 69.

⁷³ Archuleta, “Gym Shoes, Maps, and Passports, Oh My!” 192; Jacknis, “A New Thing?” 31.

NMAI received the Stockbridge-Munsee tote and stores it in the offsite storage and research facility in Maryland. The Stockbridge-Munsee tote in a museum context becomes a symbol or reference to a moment in time - to the Wisconsin Indian Craft cooperative and the history of craft production before it.

Stockbridge-Munsee Tote at the NMAI

Considering the NMAI's mission and the cultural biography of the Stockbridge-Munsee tote, there are many advantages and disadvantages of the NMAI's inclusion of the tote in its collection to a range of constituents, including the Stockbridge-Munsee Band, Wisconsin Indian Craft, the NMAI, researchers, and the general public. The following advantages may outweigh the disadvantages, but the presented disadvantages are possible arguments and should be considered. The advantages include the following:

1. The Stockbridge-Munsee Band
 - may promote their history and share their cultural identity to a national audience through the NMAI's utilization of the Stockbridge-Munsee tote, and
 - may share stories such as the *Mud Diver Story* to a national audience through the visual representation and motifs printed on the Stockbridge-Munsee tote.
2. Researchers
 - may schedule individual appointments with NMAI Cultural Resources Center staff to observe details of the Stockbridge-Munsee tote in a first-hand manner.
3. The NMAI
 - may utilize the Stockbridge-Munsee tote to promote and study the Stockbridge-Munsee Band's complex history and movement across the United States,
 - to cultivate exhibitions centering on twentieth-century Native American souvenir crafts and cooperatives and cross-cultural exchange through crafts,
 - to study craft-making techniques,
 - to introduce the history of civil rights movements such as the American Indian Movement, and
 - to study the government's role in museums and in encouraging and supporting cooperatives like Wisconsin Indian Craft.

The disadvantages include the following:

1. Wisconsin Indian Craft
 - The cooperative's goals included selling craft souvenirs, like the Stockbridge-Munsee tote, commercially – to produce crafts that would be handled and become personal keepsakes, not stored and managed in a museum context.
2. The General Public
 - Visitors wanting to see a variety of objects will not see the Stockbridge-Munsee tote in the NMAI galleries and must make a separate scheduled appointment at the NMAI's Cultural Resources Center in Maryland to see Wisconsin Indian Craft objects.

1. The Stockbridge-Munsee Band – Advantages

The Stockbridge-Munsee Band may promote their history and share their cultural identity to a national audience through the NMAI's utilization of the Stockbridge-Munsee tote. It is advantageous to have a tote produced during the Wisconsin Indian Craft cooperative in the NMAI's collection because the tote acts as a marker or reference to Wisconsin Indian Craft, providing the Museum with the opportunity to promote and study the Stockbridge-Munsee Band, specifically of the late twentieth century. The tote publicizes and perpetuates the Stockbridge-Munsee Band and its cultural identity to a national and international audience, making visitors aware of both the modern Stockbridge-Munsee Band and its past, including craft history.

The Stockbridge-Munsee Band may also share stories such as the *Mud Diver Story* to a national audience through the visual representation and motifs printed on the Stockbridge-Munsee tote. Evan T. Pritchard, writer and professor of Native American studies, argues that stories are a means of communication and cross-cultural hybridization and are intended to be shared and enjoyed, like the Stockbridge-Munsee tote. Stories unite cultures while informing others about Native American culture.⁷⁴ The motifs of fish and turtles on the tote bag help to

⁷⁴ Pritchard, *Native American Stories of the Sacred*, vii, xv.

reach across community and cultural borders, sharing a Native American origin story.

2. *Researchers – Advantages*

Researchers may schedule individual appointments with NMAI Cultural Resources Center staff to observe details of the Stockbridge-Munsee tote in an intimate manner. The NMAI exemplifies what has been termed “The Fourth Museum Concept.” This phrase describes the NMAI’s Cultural Resources Center in Maryland, a center that invites outside interpretation through individual research appointments, removing the authority and single narratives portrayed by past museums such as Heye’s the Museum of the American Indian.⁷⁵ The tote’s inclusion in the NMAI’s collection, and its storage in the research center, benefits researchers because of the tote’s availability and accessibility. Interested students or historians, for example, may schedule appointments with collection staff to visit specific objects on a personal level. The Cultural Resources Center allows researchers to study and observe the tote up close, and researchers may appreciate details like color, stitch work, materials, and labeling not noticeable if the object is displayed in a case or underneath a vitrine in a museum gallery. The Stockbridge-Munsee tote, for example, has accession labeling on the interior of the bag from both the NMAI and the Indian Arts and Crafts Board [Fig. 8]. These marks are not visible to the general public but are important indications of the tote’s cultural biography.

⁷⁵ Patricia Pierce Erickson, “Decolonizing the ‘Nation’s Attic’: The National Museum of the American Indian and the Politics of Knowledge-Making in a National Space,” in *The National Museum of the American Indian: Critical Conversations*, ed. Amy Lonetree. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 65.

3. The National Museum of the American Indian – Advantages

The NMAI has many advantages to managing the Stockbridge-Munsee tote in its collection because it expands the Museum's scope of collections and adds to its ability to recognize, understand, and support Native American culture. The Museum has many different ways in which it can share the Stockbridge-Munsee tote with its visitors. For example, it may utilize the Stockbridge-Munsee tote to promote and study the Stockbridge-Munsee Band's complex history and movement across the United States. The NMAI could include objects created through Wisconsin Indian Craft along with objects produced prior to the craft cooperative by earlier Mohican, Munsee, and Stockbridge Indians. Along with twentieth-century souvenir crafts, crafts such as eighteenth- and nineteenth-century bags, purses, and baskets from New York, Massachusetts, and Wisconsin may help recount the Stockbridge-Munsee Band's history in an exhibition at NMAI.

The NMAI may use the Stockbridge-Munsee tote to cultivate exhibitions centering on twentieth-century Native American souvenir crafts and cooperatives and cross-cultural exchange through crafts. The number of Native American craft programs and cooperatives increased beginning in the 1930s because of encouragement and funding by the Interior Department Indian Arts and Crafts Board. Wisconsin Indian Craft serves as an example of a Native American craft cooperative that operated in the United States under governmental support, and it represents the collaboration of and cross-cultural exchange between the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, Wisconsin craftsmen and professors from the University of Wisconsin's Art Extension Division, and Stockbridge-Munsee tribal members.

Another possible way the NMAI could utilize the Stockbridge-Munsee tote is by studying craft-making techniques. Compared to elaborately embroidered and beaded Native American

bags, the 1964 Stockbridge-Munsee tote appears disconnected from past Native American crafts and souvenirs. The materials and processes used by Wisconsin Indian Craft to create the Stockbridge-Munsee tote includes linoleum and block-printing, an uncommon technique for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Native American objects but seen in the Stockbridge Mohican splint basket [Fig. 4] made with potato-stamps.

The NMAI could also use the Stockbridge-Munsee tote to introduce the history of Native American civil rights movements such as the American Indian Movement and the Red Power Movement of the 1960s-80s. Increased community guilds and clubs promoted self-governance and authority. The Stockbridge-Munsee tote represents this period of identity and ownership in Native American communities, stimulated in part by craft cooperatives.

The NMAI may study the government's role in museums and in encouraging and supporting cooperatives like Wisconsin Indian Craft. Because of the Stockbridge-Munsee tote's purchase by the Indian Arts and Crafts Board and its transfer to the NMAI, the tote serves as an interesting museum case study. This case study concerns the government's role in museums, in encouraging and supporting Native American craft cooperatives, in purchasing Native American souvenir crafts, and in funding museums that manage objects like the Stockbridge-Munsee tote.

1. Wisconsin Indian Craft – Disadvantages

Wisconsin Indian Craft's goals included selling craft souvenirs, like the Stockbridge-Munsee tote, commercially – to produce crafts that would be handled and become personal keepsakes, not stored and managed in a museum context. The inclusion of the tote in the NMAI's collection is perhaps disadvantageous because of Wisconsin Indian Craft's goals and intents: "This movement conceived as a means of encouraging local employment also intends to

provide consumers with fine crafted art objects.”⁷⁶ The Stockbridge-Munsee tote was produced for purchase and use – not to be neutrally admired in a museum context, stripped of its intended purpose. The museum context, however, does become part of the tote’s cultural biography. It moves the tote from an everyday object, craft, or memoir to a preserved object, not to be touched.

2. *The General Public – Disadvantages*

The general public visiting the NMAI in Washington, D.C. do not benefit from the Stockbridge-Munsee tote because neither the tote nor the other seventeen related crafts have been exhibited or used in public programming since the Museum received these souvenir crafts in 2000. In order to see the tote, visitors must make research appointments with the Cultural Resources Center in Maryland. These appointments provide great opportunities for researchers, but the general museum visitor wanting to see a variety of objects will not see the tote in the NMAI galleries. The general public, instead, can access an image of the tote and only basic information on the NMAI’s website. At NMAI in Washington, DC, visitors will experience exhibitions promoting American Indian culture and the diversity of contemporary Native American identity through *Our Universes*, *Our Peoples*, and *Our Lives*. These permanent exhibitions center on philosophy, history, and identity without focusing on objects.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ “Crafts by the Wisconsin Indians: Stockbridge Munsee Tribe – Bowler, Wisconsin,” Wisconsin Indian Craft brochure.

⁷⁷ Amy Lonetree, “Acknowledging the Truth of History: Missed Opportunities at the National Museum of the American Indian,” in *The National Museum of the American Indian: Critical Conversations*, ed. Amy Lonetree. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 309.

NMAI Critique

In addition to the previously discussed disadvantages specific to the NMAI and the Stockbridge-Munsee tote, related issues are included in Amy Lonetree and Amanda J. Cobb's *The National Museum of the American Indian: Critical Conversations*, a collection of essays. It contains contrasting opinions (Native and non-Native art historians, museum professionals, and critics), debating the successes and failures of the Museum's mission, collection, and exhibits. For example, in one essay, "Gym Shoes, Maps, and Passports, Oh My! Creating Community or Creating Chaos at the National Museum of the American Indian?" Women and gender studies professor Elizabeth Archuleta (Yaqui/Chicana) argues that the NMAI has acted too ambitiously. She explains that the Museum, with its vague and encompassing mission, has attempted too much. The NMAI struggles to "educate the ignorant" and "cater to an indigenous audience" simultaneously because of the enormity and complexity of such an objective for a single museum.⁷⁸ Anthropologist Gwyneira Isaac expands Archuleta's belief that the NMAI has acted too ambitiously, and she considers visitors' reactions to an unfamiliar museum experience. In "What Are Our Expectations Telling Us? Encounters with the National Museum of the American Indian," Isaac critiques the Museum's practices regarding its collection and the dearth of objects on display in its exhibitions. Isaac explains that the NMAI provides thematic exhibitions that are "scattered," "disparate," and "unguided."⁷⁹ She argues that visitors have set expectations about

⁷⁸ Elizabeth Archuleta, "Gym Shoes, Maps, and Passports, Oh My! Creating Community or Creating Chaos at the National Museum of the American Indian?" in *The National Museum of the American Indian: Critical Conversations*, ed. Amy Lonetree. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 204.

⁷⁹ Gwyneira Isaac, "What Are Our Expectations Telling Us? Encounters with the National Museum of the American Indian." in *The National Museum of the American Indian: Critical Conversations*, ed. Amy Lonetree. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 250.

what they will see in a museum and how the displays will look, and the NMAI's style of unconventional storytelling in exhibitions is unfamiliar to many visitors. The thematic exhibitions focusing on photographs and videos rather than object-centered exhibitions require visitors to actively interpret. Visitors are invited to read, research, and ask questions in order to understand and explore the stories being told in NMAI exhibitions. In "Acknowledging the Truth of History: Missed Opportunities at the National Museum of the American Indian," ethnic studies and museum studies scholar Amy Lonetree (Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin) also critiques the NMAI's exhibitions, describing them as "confusing." She indicates that they are more thematic rather than object-centered and context-oriented, requiring visitors to participate.⁸⁰ The NMAI does not utilize its extensive collection of objects to enhance exhibitions, and visitors are often surprised, even disappointed by the Museum's challenging exhibitions.⁸¹

Conclusion

The Stockbridge-Munsee tote and other objects created through Wisconsin Indian Craft are not currently included in NMAI exhibitions; none of the eighteen objects have been displayed in past exhibitions or used in educational programming, and they are only accessible by private research appointments in Maryland. The Stockbridge-Munsee tote was an object created so that others may observe and admire it. Native American attitudes towards objects like this tote differ drastically from emotional and private connections to ceremonial objects that have been collected and exhibited in the past. Rather than promoting an exotic, stereotyped identity of Native cultures through sacred objects, the Stockbridge-Munsee tote may help to respectfully

⁸⁰ Lonetree, "Acknowledging the Truth of History," 310.

⁸¹ Lonetree, "Acknowledging the Truth of History," 313.

and faithfully represent the Stockbridge-Munsee Band's culture and identity. It can help tell Native American stories through the motifs and imagery (e.g. fish and turtles) in a format chosen by Stockbridge-Munsee community members: commercial objects. The Wisconsin Indian Craft program involved many communities and was a product, itself, of cross-cultural exchange. The NMAI can utilize the tote for its culturally complex history so that a national audience may be engaged. Visitors would learn about the program's relationship with Wisconsin University, the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, and the NMAI.

CONCLUSION

The study of a twentieth-century Native American craft object reveals a multifaceted history that includes government involvement, tribal identity, and cultural pride. The Stockbridge-Munsee tote's cultural biography shows how a modern object references the past and energizes the future. By identifying the tote's associated meanings and shifting associated meanings, this thesis has constructed the Stockbridge-Munsee tote's cultural biography and revealed that the tote's associated meanings do not merely shift from context to context. The tote's associated meanings build upon one another to create layers of coexisting associated meanings.

In one context, the tote represents a craft object created by tribal members as a means to revisit handiwork and learn new craft skills, promote pride and tribal identity, and create a profitable business for the Stockbridge-Munsee community. The Stockbridge-Munsee tote represents a period of renewed authority and self-representation in Native American communities, stimulated in part by craft cooperatives. Later social movements, such as the American Indian Movement and the Red Power Movement, were perhaps motivated in part by the increased confidence and cultural pride created by programs like these Native American craft programs and cooperatives. Wisconsin Indian Craft was developed to preserve arts and crafts skills and a community's cultural heritage, along with supplying a source of income and promoting identity. In another context, the tote represents a commercial product of a

government-supported cooperative, marketed in a romanticized style, purchased by a governmental department, and ultimately included in a museum collection.

The Stockbridge-Munsee tote bag and other objects created through Wisconsin Indian Crafts are not currently included in NMAI exhibitions or in educational programming, but the Stockbridge-Munsee tote was an object created so that others may observe and admire it. If displayed in a museum context, the tote and its imagery could help share Native American stories, such as the Munsee Indian creation story the *Mud Diver Story*, to a national audience in a format chosen by Stockbridge-Munsee community members: commercial objects.

Because of the Stockbridge-Munsee tote's intricate cultural biography, it has the potential to be used by the NMAI as a tool to study Native American culture, identity, and history through souvenir crafts instead of with ceremonial objects. The NMAI may utilize Stockbridge-Munsee tote to promote and study the Stockbridge-Munsee Band and its history, twentieth-century Native American souvenir crafts and cooperatives, and craft-making techniques. The tote references the period immediately prior to a pivotal section of history – the American Indian Movement and other civil rights movements that returned pride and self-representation to Native Americans. Craft cooperatives such as Wisconsin Indian Craft contributed to the culminating energy of confidence and identity. The Stockbridge-Munsee tote and the NMAI, as a museum case-study, may contribute to the study of the government's role in museums and in encouraging and supporting cooperatives like Wisconsin Indian Craft. To the NMAI, the Stockbridge-Munsee tote's cultural biography proves the importance of an object and its associated meanings.

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ILLUSTRATIONS



Figure 1. Stockbridge-Munsee Tote.



Figure 2. Munsee Delaware Pouch.



Figure 3. Stockbridge Mohican Bag.



Figure 4. Stockbridge Mohican Basket.



Figure 5. Stockbridge Mohican Bag.



Figure 6. Mohican Club.



Figure 7. Stockbridge-Munsee Pendant.



Figure 8. Stockbridge-Munsee Tote, detail.