Ancestral Women Exhibit: Wisconsin's 12 Tribes

Artist, Mary Burns

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Artist Statement, Mary Burns

The Ancestral Women Exhibit has been a journey of joy, learning, spiritual and artistic growth, collaboration with elders, their families and communities, and hard work.

My goal in creating this exhibit was to honor and celebrate ancestral women. These are women who have held families and communities together: women leaders who have kept traditions, cultures, and languages alive. They are the glue in the fabric of their communities. This tribute honors women elders from each of Wisconsin's 12 Native American tribes.

I collaborated with the tribes to see whom they wished to be honored in this exhibit. Using photographs they provided, I redrew and reworked each design preparatory to weaving it. I incorporated other imagery into each piece as well, such as clan symbols or borders showcasing traditional beadwork. The exhibit includes twelve portraits, six clan symbols, and four landscape pieces of cultural importance.

All the designs were created by me and woven on my hand-jacquard loom. The warp and weft are both cotton. The hand-woven textiles connect us to the strength, beauty and determination of the women they portray. It has been an honor for me to create this project.

One of my teachers said, *Listen and practice the skills of your art every day so that you can hear the work when it speaks to you, and you are ready to do the work*. This work spoke to my heart and still speaks to me. I hope it speaks to you as well.

Dedication

To all women who have carried the light before us.

The Clan System






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"Each tribe organized itself into clans, providing 'a framework of government to give them strength and order' … In the Ojibwe O-do-daym-i-wan (clan system), there were seven original clans: Crane, Loon, Fish, Marten, Deer, Bear, and Bird. The Crane and Loon Clans contributed the chiefs, and their shared leadership provided important checks and balances. From the Fish Clan came the intellectuals and the mediators; from the Marten Clan, the warriors; from the Deer Clan, the poets. Bear Clan people served as protectors: some policed the village while others learned about medicines and used their knowledge to heal people. Finally, the Bird Clan provided the spiritual leaders. Marriage between a clan was forbidden.

"The Menominee and the Ho-Chunk divided their clans into two groups, representing either the earth or sky. Among the Menominee, the earth clans, including the Bear Clan, supplied the peace chiefs. The sky clans, such as the Eagle Clan, produced the war chiefs. In Ho-Chunk culture, the roles of the clans were reversed: sky clans were responsible for leadership during times of peace; earth clan chiefs led their communities during war.

"… It is worth noting that clan leaders, or chiefs, did not 'rule' in the manner of European royalty, but rather led by consent. Tribal members expected their chiefs to be generous and to put the interests of the community above their own interests."

According to William W. Warren in his History of the Ojibwe People, within the Ojibwe tribes alone, there were at least twenty-one totems and sub-totems: Crane, Catfish, Loon, Bear, Marten, Wolf, Reindeer, Merman, Pike, Lynx, Eagle, Rattlesnake, Moose, Black Duck, Sucker, Goose, Sturgeon, White Fish, Beaver, Gull, and Hawk. The Ancestral Women exhibit illustrates seven clans – Bear, Loon, Turtle, Eagle, Marten, Sturgeon, and Crane:

The largest clan was the Bear (Makwa) clan. Bear clan members were war chiefs and warriors, and served as a police. Bear Clan members spent a lot of time patrolling the land surrounding the village, and in so doing, they learned which roots, bark, and plants could be used for medicines to treat the ailments of their people.

The Loon Clan along with The Crane Clan were given the power of Chieftainship. By working together, these two clans gave the people a balanced government with each serving as a check on the other. The Crane Clan (Ajejauk) were known for their clear and loud voices and were recognized as famous speakers.

The Turtle Clan was responsible for the shifting of the Earth and cycles of the moon. The clan's obligation was the environment.

The Eagle Clan was part of the Bird Clan. The Bird Clan represented the spiritual leaders of the people and gave the nation its vision of well-being and its highest development of the spirit. The people of the Bird Clan were said to possess the characteristics of the eagle, the head of their clan, in that they pursued the highest elevations of the mind just as the eagle pursues the highest elevations of the sky.

The Marten Clan (Waabizheski) were hunters, food gathers and warriors of the people. They became known as master strategists in planning the defense of their people. Members of the Martin Clan served as pipe bearers and message carriers for the chiefs.

The Fish (Giigo) clans (including Sturgeon or Namewug) were known for long life. The people of the Fish Clan were the teachers and scholars. They helped children develop skills and healthy spirits.

Alice E. Ackley (Randall), Wa We Ya gesuck go qwa, "Around the Sky Lady"

Sokaogon Chippewa Community of Mole Lake, Wisconsin

Alice Ackley was born to Chief Dewitt Ackley and Phyllis (Johnson) Ackley in 1900 on the shores of Lake Metonga, Forest County, in a wigwam near Crandon, WI. She was born a member of the Sokaogon Chippewa Community Band of Lake Superior Anishinabe Indians. As a young girl, Alice lived and roamed the home land of her people, The Post Lake Band of Chippewa Indians, Townships 34 and 35, R.L. 11 & 12, East. She lived with her grandparents until the BIA government school at Thoma, WI, came to pick up all Indian children and educate them.

Upon finishing her education at Thoma, she returned to Antigo, WI, to stay with her aunt and uncle. There, she married George S. Randall and had 4 children. They lived and farmed near the city of Antigo, and in 1938, the family moved to Mole Lake, WI.

The Federal Government passed a bill to establish Indian Reservations for landless Indian People. She helped her brother, Willard Ackley, who was Chief of the Mole Lake Band of Chippewa Indians, to write the Constitution and By-Laws for the Sokaogon Chippewa Tribal Government. She served as enrollment clerk for the Tribal Government and also served as tribal secretary for 27 years. Alice was also a healer and spiritual leader.

In gratitude for the time she spent serving her people, she was elected as Indian Mother of the Year in 1967. She was proud to receive this honor.

She spent the rest of her days wild ricing, weaving rugs, and as tribal historian. She finally walked on into the Spirit World surrounded by her children, grandchildren and greatgrandchildren near her home at Mole Lake in the year of 1978.

The Ackley family has always been very involved with wild ricing. Wild rice is seen as a gift from the creator and a main staple in their traditional diet. This weaving portrays Alice beneath a "sun circle" to acknowledge her name and her spiritual path, as she is parching wild rice.

Bernice Davids Miller Pigeon, Nutkaskwa, "The Gatherer"

Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians

Bernice was born on September 1, 1918, the oldest child of Elmer and Eureka Jourdan Davids. She was raised on Big Lake in the town of Red Springs near Gresham, Wisconsin, on a little farm, and often talked about picking berries, chasing cows, and swimming across Big Lake. In 1935, at age 16, she married Arvid E. Miller, and they had 10 children. They also fostered Jim and helped raise Julie.

Bernice always had a curiosity about many things. She always had books around the house to satisfy this curiosity. She was especially interested in gardening, medicinal herbs, birds, trees, native plants, even weeds. When she and Arvid traveled, she would have a bucket and shovel in the trunk of the car in case she saw an interesting plant she could dig up and take home. She was known for her big garden of perennial flowers, and often invited others to take home a flower they liked. She loved nature and was known as "The Gatherer."

She also was very interested in Mohican tribal history and was always gathering information about the Tribe. She was the founder of the tribal historical library and museum in memory of Arvid, whose papers were the basis of the tribal archive. She became the Tribal Historian and continued to work on adding to the collections until her death in July of 2005.

She and Arvid left behind over 200 descendants.

In her woven portrait, Mary wanted to convey Bernice's strength and integrity. She is shown with the tribal symbol "Many Trails" which represents Endurance, Strength and Hope, and the turtle depicting her clan.

Diana Miller and her grandmother, Che-mon *Louise Amour*

Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin

Diana was born and raised on the Menominee Reservation where she lived through the termination period, a time when the U.S. government attempted to end the status of Indian tribes as sovereign nations. She had one grandparent from Lac Courte Oreilles and one grandmother from Menominee, Che-mon Louise Amour.

Diana left Menominee to work in Appleton when she was 18 years old, eventually moving to Milwaukee and working for the Health Department. She attended UW-Milwaukee and Marquette University where she studied labor law and conflict resolution.

Diana worked in outreach to the Native American community. She was a staff representative of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) in Madison from 1993 to 2008 and was the first American Indian woman on the union staff of AFSCME. She was also one of three American Indian women elected from Wisconsin to participate in the International Year of the Woman. Diana also dances at powwows and creates powwow regalia.

Diana is very politically active. She was a founder and vice-chairperson of the American Indian Caucus. She is also the chairperson of the Menominee County Democratic Party and a member of 8th Congressional District Executive Board of the Democratic Party of Wisconsin.

Born in the late 1800s, **Che-mon Louise Amour** was an integral part of the Menominee Nation leadership and was known as a medicine woman. Che-mon travelled to Oshkosh for a celebration of Chief Oshkosh and the city of Oshkosh. There she is pictured with Menominee delegations, and she was the only woman among them.
Diana never met Che-mon, as she died before Diana was born.

The weaving of Che-mon Louise Amour is based on a historic photo. She was a strong leader and an appliqué artist who created her own patterns. Her granddaughter Diana carries on these traditions. Mary wanted to feature their strength and their appliqué patterns in the weaving

Dr. Lillie Rosa Minoka-Hill, Youdagent, "She who carries aid"

Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin

Dr. Lillie Rosa Minoka-Hill became the second female Native American doctor in the United States in 1902. Born a Mohawk Indian in 1876, she married Charles Hill, an Oneida Indian, and moved with him back to Oneida, WI, where he had built a house on a farm. Dr. Hill practiced medicine but didn't have a Wisconsin license, so she practiced informally in her kitchen.

She practiced in an "inconspicuous way" – she gave without demanding payment. The doctor on the Oneida reservation left to serve in World War I, and so more and more people came to her. Influenza was rampant and she and her six children became sick, too. Charles contracted appendicitis and died in 1916, leaving Rosa to raise their small children, run the farm, and doctor all those who came to her.

In this era, Native people were denied access to hospitals and health education – child mortality was three times the national average. Dr. Hill learned herbal remedies from Oneida medicine men and women and incorporated those skills into her kitchen clinic for 40 years. She made house calls, taught preventative medicine, and accepted food as payment for her services.

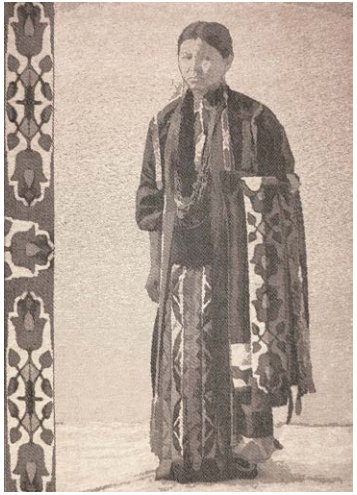
Though she had a heart attack in 1946 that left her blind in one eye, she continued practicing from her home. In 1949, she received the "Doctor of the Year" award from the American Medical Association. That same year she was named "Indian of the Year" in Chicago. Perhaps most importantly to her, that year she was also adopted as a tribal member of the Oneida and given a new name – Youdagent – "she who carries aid."

Dr. Hill died in 1952, and two years later, the Oneida church community erected a monument in memory of Rosa. The inscription reads: "Physician, Good Samaritan, and friend of People of all religions in this community, erected to her memory by the Indians and white people." It includes: "I was sick and you visited me."

Mary's design depicts Dr. Hill's adoption, as requested by her family, showing her with Melissa O. Cornelius. In the background Mary included portions of the Oneida tribal logo and Tribal Belt, important symbols to the tribe.

Emma Pettibone, Chahememenonkgaweegah

Ho-Chunk Nation, People of the Big Voice



Emma Pettibone was a masterful bead worker who sold belts, watch fobs, and chains to H. H. Bennett in Wisconsin Dells in 1904. Emma lived in Strongs Prairie, about 30 miles north of the Dells.

Emma's weaving was the first piece that Mary wove, and from her came the inspiration to create this exhibit. Emma was well known for her beadwork and handcrafts. Mary designed the weaving to depict Emma's beauty and strength as well as highlight her beautiful silk appliqué work.

Harriet Theresa (LaFernier) Balber

Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

Born into the Maang (Loon) Clan in 1927 to James and Josephine (Gurnoe) LaFernier, Harriet was raised with eight siblings. She attended Haskell Indian School and graduated from Bayfield High School. Her early educational experiences, the good and the bad, would have the greatest impact on her life. She often spoke of her love of learning and how it helped to support and change her worldviews. Harriet took great and humble pride in the educational achievements of her ten children, all of whom established careers in the areas of Law, Medicine, Education and Human and Social Services.

Harriet shared her truth, honesty, strength, humility, wisdom, bravery and respect. She exuded love and compassion for others and exemplified how one could turn their personal challenges into positive change. She became a frequent speaker and presenter at regional and national conferences for organizations that supported the work of empowering American Indians.

Harriet strongly believed that an individual was their own best advocate in determining their well-being. It was that belief combined with her convictions and values that gave her the strength to leave an unhealthy marriage at a time when most women of her time would not have had the courage to do so. Alone, and as a mother of ten children, she became the primary caregiver of her family, supporting her children while working full-time.

Harriet helped many women struggling with family and domestic issues. She continued to address these issues when she first became a Community Advocate, and later when she was appointed as a Tribal Judge for her tribe. Although she was reserved in speech and demeanor, she learned to speak both with authority and compassion.

Harriet had a hearty laugh and loved spending time with her large family and friends. Her motto was: "Whatever it takes to strengthen your faith in yourself – you need to do it!"

Harriet's love and compassion for others combined with her generous spirit inspired the design for this weaving. Mary wanted to portray Harriet's love of family, community, and life into this smiling portrait. Harriet loved Ojibwe floral patterns and beadwork, and thus Mary embellished this weaving with a floral pattern.

Harriet LaSarge, Waabizk

St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin

Wanda McFadden, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the St. Croix Band, said this about Harriet LeSarge: "Harriet had a special light that surrounded her and a sparkle in her eyes you couldn't miss. Her gentle way towards all of us and just people in general is something I always remember her by – such a soft spoken lady with a heart of gold."

Mary wanted to convey this in the weaving. Harriet was a member of the Marten Clan, and so a marten was included in the portrait.

Lucy Mustache Begay, Mizhakwad, "Clear Sky"

Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

Lucy's clan was the sturgeon – she is from the place where they fish through a hole in the ice. Her parents were John and Josie (Carroll) Mustache of Post and Round Lake respectively. She was raised on Chief Lake where she grew up eating fish, wild rice, deer meat, rabbit, and other wild food, all of which helped her to live for 94 years. The family practiced traditional ways of harvesting, honoring their Ojibwe roots.

Born in 1907, in a wigwam, she attended the Hayward Indian Boarding School in Hayward, WI, near her home in Chief Lake. There she became adept at English, but Lucy never forgot her native Ojibwe language.

At 19, she moved to Chicago where she met her husband Bahe Begay, from Chinle, Arizona. They raised two sons, Eugene and Duane, who collectively bore Lucy Begay twelve grandchildren.

Lucy and Bahe were two of the founders of the Chicago Indian Center, and Bahe served on its Board of Directors.

Lucy was a professional seamstress and earned additional income from selling her Ojibwe bead work, dancing and sewing. Lucy and Bahe eventually moved back to Lucy's ancestral homeland at Chief Lake where Lucy became well-known for her knowledge of the Ojibwe language and her skill at making quilts and beadwork.

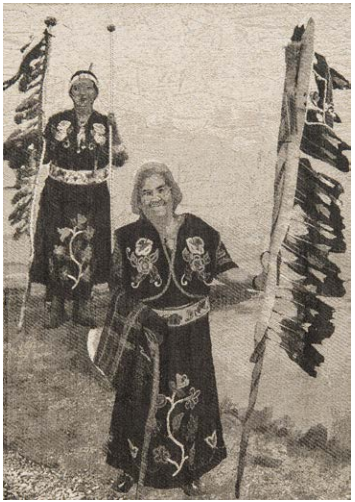
Lucy kept to Ojibwe customs, gathering and utilizing wild foods, and is remembered as typical of Anishinaabe mothers, offering undying love, care and sincerity to her family. She loved her sons and their families, and lived with them both upon retirement. Lucy followed the Midewiwin faith – she was second degree Mide – and she was known for her deep spiritual faith and the sparkle in her eye.

Mary designed the portrait of Lucy holding her happy grandson Alex Gillespie, with a sky background and border of a swimming sturgeon.

LAC COURTE OREILLES
Pride of the Ojibwe

Marie Estelle Webster Gilane, Ingashi

Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa Indians



Marie Webster was born at home in Odanah, Wisconsin, in 1935, during the "moon of wild rice harvesting," Manoominike-giizis. She was delivered by her grandmother, Julia Bennett Zhiibayaash, and was the first-born child to her mother, Cecelia Rebecca Bennett, and father, Francis Raymond Webster. She joined a family that would eventually include 8 brothers and 2 sisters.

By the end of World War II, due to lack of work, the Webster's moved to Milwaukee. At age 16, Marie went to work for Western Tobacco at a minimum wage of 75 cents an hour. She joined the Marine Corps in 1956 and served for two years before receiving an honorable discharge. She had her first child, Terry Francis Webster, in 1958. In 1960, she met the love of her life, William Gilane Jr. (Bill), and they went on to make their home together for 25 years, having two children before Bill died in 1989.

Marie eventually met another soul mate, August Zamka (Augie). Marie was a trustee of the Congregation of the Great Spirit Church for 20 years and is the keeper of the women's drum at the church, where she sings every Sunday. She has told her family and friends that singing has kept her strong and healthy.

Julia Bennett, Zhiibayaash

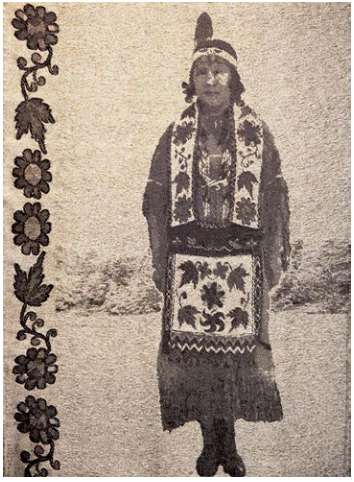
"If you are going to do something, do it properly." When Julia said this, the "something" was to be done in the Ojibwe way, whether creating a piece of beadwork or knocking wild rice. Ojibwe was Julia's first language; however, as it was with many other Ojibwe people, she acquired English under the tutelage of Catholic nuns.

Julia was known throughout the Odanah community for her many cultural skills, in particular her many fine pieces of beadwork. The community came to depend on her for cultural knowledge and traditional Indian medicine. Her prominence took her far beyond the Odanah community. Because of Julia's respected cultural bearing and knowledge, it is told that the Bad River Tribe in the late 1930's entrusted the Migiziwigwanaatig, the Eagle Flag Staff, to Julia to be genawendang, "one who is caretaker," one of the highest honors within the Ojibwe way, which she faithfully retained until her end-time.

The weaving, portraying the intergenerational strength of the women, depicts grandmother and granddaughter holding the Eagle Staff and wearing the same decorated dress.

Mary Waubiness George, Waseyan, "First Light Rays of the Day"

Forest County Potawatomi, Keepers of the Fire



Mary Waubiness, whose Indian name was Waseyan, meaning "first light rays of the day," was born on August 20, 1910 to Bemsek and Charles Waubiness of McCord Indian Village. She had an elder brother named Mtegwab, meaning "bow." Mary and Mtegwab were both fluent speakers of the Potawatomi language.

Waseyan attended Pipestone Indian Training School in Pipestone, Minnesota, which opened in 1893 and closed in 1953. Aside from academics, she learned a variety of other life skills including sewing, gardening, cooking and nursing.

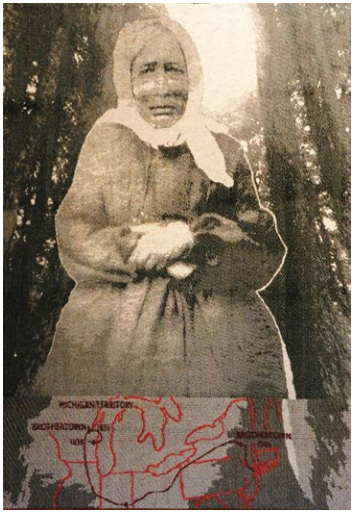
In 1927, she married Isaac George (Gawsat) and had one child, a daughter named Arlene, shortly afterwards. Waseyan was a community contributor in foster parenting, passing on her learned skills to younger ladies, and she served as a midwife, delivering many babies when called upon.

She began her spirit journey on March 16, 1984, and in June of the same year, her husband followed her.

Waseyan's devotion to her community, her knowledge of traditional skills, and her work as a midwife were important threads that rooted her in place. For her portrait, Mary highlighted Waseyan's floral beadwork on her traditional regalia by drawing out the patterns and laying them in as a border.

Polly (Moore) DeGroat

Brothertown Indian Nation



The Brothertown (or Brotherton) were formed from Algonquian speaking tribes, including Mohegan, all of whom were devastated by contact. Each move westward fractured a community. The Brothertown essentially formed a town of brothers away from their ancestral homes. As a member of a family that chose to remain behind in New Jersey, Polly (Moore) DeGroat's story signifies a loss of community, a multigenerational desire to reconnect, and the knowhow and strength it takes to make the journey.

The Brothertown are known for their educators and pursuit of knowledge. Polly DeGroat is the descendant of two lesser known Brothertown educators: Bartholomew Scott Calvin, aka Shawuskukhkung (Wilted Grass), and his father, Stephen Calvin. Stephen Calvin was particularly known as being an excellent teacher and philanthropist. His son, Polly's grandfather Bartholomew Scott Calvin, is known as the second American Indian to attend Princeton.

Although Polly (Moore) DeGroat may not have received a formal education, she embodied the appreciation for knowledge found in her grandfather and great-grandfather. And though Polly and her family were separated from the core group of Brothertown who settled in Wisconsin, the retention of their heritage and contact with the tribe were never lost.

Having the namesake of her grandmother, Polly Melinda DeGroat brought her family and her grandmother's spirit home to the Brothertown community in Wisconsin. The Brothertown may not be "home" on their ancestral land, but they are home within their community. Polly Melinda DeGroat traveled by boat down the Erie Canal along with her eight siblings and their mother when her father died during the Civil War. They settled in Stockbridge, Wisconsin (near the Brothertown settlement), to reconnect with family and friends. This connection was possible only through the sharing of stories of where her ancestors moved to and where they were from, and from a sense of belonging to something greater.

Polly is the oldest of the elders portrayed in the exhibit. In weaving her image, Mary depicted Polly in a grove of old trees with sunlight pouring down to make her more ethereal and have a feeling of the sky within her. Along the bottom Mary placed a map illustrating the removals of the Brothertown Indians from their original home. They moved four times in sixty years.

Tinker Schuman, Migizikwe, "Eagle Woman"

Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

Tinker is deeply respected within the Ojibwe Nation of Lac du Flambeau as a Eagel Staff Carrier, Woman Pipe Carrier, Sweat Lodge Leader, Ogichida Chidewegon (Big Drum) Jingle Dress Dancer and ceremonial Sundancer and Moondancer, a healer, a poet, and an artist.

Tinker lives her culture and beliefs, and inspires others to do so as well. She has dedicated her life to the perpetuation of Anishinaabe culture – from core spiritual beliefs and customs to songs, dances, regalia and language.

She is a role model for Native women because you can see the Seven Teachings in the way she lives her life: **Wisdom:** She has the credibility of a well-respected elder to ensure that all are doing things in a way that is grounded in Anishinaabe culture and values. She is also a keeper of Anishinaabe oral history. **Respect:** Tinker is embraced by people of all spiritual faiths because she lives a good-hearted life and respects all peoples' spiritual pathways, as well as all living beings. **Bravery:** Tinker is a protector, defender, and provider. As an Ogichidaakwe (warrior woman), she has stood up for Anishinaabe rights during very difficult times. **Honesty:** Tinker is honest with people without causing harm. **Humility:** Tinker has generously and compassionately supported others without seeking recognition. **Truth:** Tinker speaks her truth, lives her truth, and uses her truth to help others. **Love:** Tinker is spiritually grounded and exudes the kind of peace that one attains when they are clear in their love for Creator. She loves others with an open heart, and they in turn love her back.

Tinker's work as an alcohol and drug abuse counselor has helped many people. She serves on the Board for the Waswaaganing Indian Bowl Living Arts and Cultures Center. She authored the book Reborn in the Sun, co-authored the book The Healing Blanket, and produced a CD All My Relatives. Tinker also organizes Mother Earth Water Walks, teaches the Ojibwe language, and has been the culture coordinator for the Lac du Flambeau elders.

For her portrait, Mary depicted Tinker in her traditional regalia along with the eagle, Eagle Staff, and pipe in front of Strawberry Island, a sacred site for the Lac du Flambeau Band.

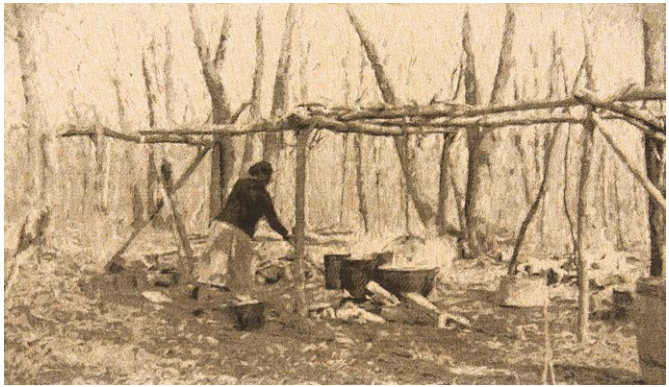
Awakening Spirit

The history, culture and future of Wisconsin's Tribal Nations are inextricably intertwined with water. In every tribe's cultural traditions, water has a spiritual component that gives it a key role in stories, ceremonies, religious practices, and daily life.

Water was imbued with feminine roles and symbolism. Women were expected to gather water and conduct ceremonies to preserve this vital resource. Water's life force was symbolized by its rush from the mother preceding birth. Because women give life, they are the keepers of the water.

It has been said that the water spirit can be seen in the shimmering light of sunrise.

It is in this spirit that Mary wove this piece – a misty September dawn rising over a wilderness lake. Here early morning ghosts swirl and beckon, alternately obscuring the distant trees and then letting glimpses of the pines peek through.



Maple Sugaring

From March to early April, when the nights frosted and the days would thaw, maple sap began to run in the sugar maple trees. Family groups who'd not seen each other over the winter reunited and worked together. The trees were tapped and the sap gathered every day. The finished product took one of three forms: syrup, sugar, or cake. To make sugar, they slowly boiled the sap to a thick syrup and poured it into a trough, where it was "worked" until it crystallized into grains. To make cakes, or "hard sugar," they poured the thick syrup into makuks (birch bark containers) and let it cool. The maple sugar flavored vegetables, cereals, fish, and meats, was mixed with water for a sweet drink, and was an important trade item.

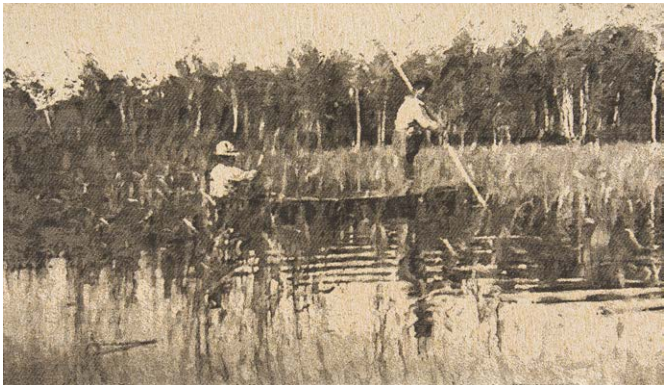
After cooking the first sugar of the year, the people always offered a small amount to the Great Spirit, or Manidoo. Traditionally, women assumed the principal role in sugar-making, and most of the maple-sugar groves were owned matrilineally – in the name of a woman.

Birch-bark Canoe Building

No single item in the traditional economy of Wisconsin's Woodland Indians combined artistic finesse and craftsmanship better than the birch-bark canoe, the principal mode of transportation used for thousands of years. Canoe builders had a trained eye for picking out a "canoe tree." They wanted a single large piece of bark to run the entire bottom length of the vessel; otherwise it required piecing additional bark that needed double-stitch sewing. Timing was critical. A short window of opportunity typically occurred in late June when the bark would virtually spring off the tree with a loud zipping noise.

A typical family canoe was 14-feet long, but during the fur trade, much larger ones were built for long-distance freighting on the Great Lakes, some as long as 36 feet, which could carry 2,000 pounds of goods.

The Ojibwe believe that the legendary Wenabozho invented the canoe for them. Within the Menominee Nation, the Crane Clan were their builders and had to master the knowledge of making things out of the materials presented to them by nature.



Wild Ricing

Harvested in the early autumn, wild rice was immensely important to Native Americans, particularly the Ojibwe and Menominee, who lived where it grew abundantly. The Menominee took their name from the word for wild rice, manomin, and were often referred to as the "Wild Rice People" by Europeans.

Entire communities would move to the lakeshore for the harvest. Working in family groups, typically a man would pole a canoe out to the family's section of the lake, where a woman, armed with two sticks, would bend the rice stalks over the canoe and knock off kernels until the canoe was full. On shore, the rice was sun-dried or parched over low fires, then danced or pounded to separate the grain from the husk, and finally winnowed in the wind.

No food was more important to the tribes than wild rice. Native tribes, as well as traders, explorers, and missionaries, depended on the virtual imperishability of wild rice to stave off famine during the long winters. Today, wild rice remains an essential staple food for Great Lakes Indian people.

Contributors to the Ancestral Women Exhibit

Thank you for believing in this project.

Ader, Joanne and John
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Bogdan, Val
Bormann, Dan and Jean
Brandt, Meta Reigel
Brossard, Deb
Burch, Martha and Kurt
Burns, Jean*
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Burns, Patrick
Cortright, Daisy
Currie, Ann & Jeff
Daulton, Terry
Debbink, Jeanne
Drawz, Ken and Sharon
Drum, Alan and Sue
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You can learn more…

Ancestral Women Oral Histories

Listen to voices of relatives and tribal members who have provided their accounts and memories. Individual I-pods can be checked out at the service desk.

Ancestral Women Written Histories

In addition to this booklet, a more comprehensive history is available at the service desk.

Mary Burns

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A special thank you to photographers Jim Schumaker and Mitchell Myers for capturing Mary's art.

Ancestral Women Of Creative Spirit

WE ARE GREAT GRANDMOTHERS, GRANDMOTHERS, MOTHERS, DAUGHTERS, AUNTIES, GETE ANISHINAABEKWE LIFE GIVERS, CULTURAL BEARERS. WE are the Red women earth vessels.

We are the sounds of eagle whistles, the heartbeat healing love and the backbone of our families, and local reservation or urban communities, representatives of our states .We embellish our aura with love keeping native culture alive even through assimilation. Two paths: One living to keep our Anishinaabe culture by ceremonies, pipes, sun dancing, moon dancing, mide, big drum, water walks; The other path church, school, government, councils, committees. Both paths are the major concern for the future generations leaving their individual legacies.

The drum beat life, like the smudging cedar. How the Great Spirit Gitchie Manido blesses survival from our ancestor's sources of life by hearing their prayers of the past, present and future. The ogichidaakwe are the center of their homes and connectors in the tree of spiritual life. Also the relationship with sky world, grandmother moon, grandfather sun, the circle of life with four seasons and the four directions.

Their LINEAGE direct descent from our ancestors, our clans, our names, reproduced. With the perception reality, weaving the values, women of leadership giving intricate teachings to live and help their families. We are listening for our guidance which concedes the understanding of our way of life. We are reflecting the prayers from our Gete Anishinaabe Grandparents years ago.

We have great humbleness for reverence to OUR GREAT SPIRIT CREATOR of all. The awareness that we are in the Creator's presence, each moment is sacred. Capturing woven images of ancestral women brings honor by dignity. Abreast reverence, awareness does reflect many life endurances. Strong hearts filled with love and kindness from "WEAVER MARY BURNS" MEQWETCHES.

Migizikwe Nindizhinkaaz
Migizikwe Dodem, Waaswaagoning Indoojibaa
AKA: Mildred "Tinker" Schuman
September 22, 2016

The CVA would like to thank and recognize the following for supporting the

Ancestral Women Exhibit: Wisconsin's 12 Tribes

Support for this exhibit was given from the Nancy Frawley Fund within the Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin.

Guests will be able to view the exhibit at the CVA and listen to oral histories about each woman recorded by relatives of the women or tribal members on individual I-pods. Support for this project was provided through the Community Arts Grant Program of the Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin, with funds provided by the Wisconsin Arts Board, a state agency, the Community Foundation, and the B.A. & Esther Greenheck Foundation.

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Gallery & Gift Shop: Tuesday - Friday 10am - 5pm
Gallery: Saturday 12pm - 4pm
Gift Shop: Saturday 10am - 4pm
Closed Sundays, Mondays & Holidays

The CVA offers a broad range of opportunities for both artists and art enthusiasts. Our art classes and exhibits engage the community and spark creativity in the school districts. Exhibits in the CVA Caroline S. Mark Gallery and Loft Gallery are accessible and free of admission five days a week. Our Opening Gallery Galas, celebrating the opening of each new exhibit, are also free and open to the public. The CVA partners with Wausau Events to offer free art projects at community events such as Summer Kick Off, Harvest Fest, the Holiday Parade, and Winterfest. This year the CVA was awarded the 2016 Small Business of the Year in the Charitable Non-Profit Category with the Wausau Chamber of Commerce.

To successfully operate these endeavors, the CVA depends on funding through grants, sponsorships, donations, membership, and priceless volunteer time. Stop in at the CVA and see our value!

Thank you to all of our past, present and future sponsors, donors and volunteers!

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The Center for the Visual Arts is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit visual arts organization working to engage people in the visual arts and add to the livability of the Wausau regional community. The CVA has a long-standing relationship and history in downtown Wausau as a Gallery, Gift Shop, and a School of Art offering art classes for children and adults. For the past 30 plus years the CVA has been located in the historic building on the corner of North 4th and Scott Street, as a part of the Arts Block.