

Glengarry Cap

Mohawk (Kanien'kehá:ka) Artist

ca. 1850-1870

3 ½" h x 10 ¾" l x 5 ½" w

T0276

<http://collections.fenimoreartmuseum.org/node/5094>

By Heather George (University of Waterloo)

As physical evidence of the past, Indigenous cultural material expresses a great deal about the dramatic changes that have taken place in the lives of Indigenous peoples' ~~their~~ ongoing resiliency and continued sovereignty [1]. On the surface raised beadwork is an adornment, a thing of beauty and expression of both the unique eye of the artist and the collective development in community of unique styles and methods of applying beads to fabric. However, approaching beadwork with a critical lens allows us to think more deeply about the intersections of colonialisms and Indigenous knowledge expressed through this art form [2].

Raised beadwork has a particularly strong connection to Haudenosaunee communities, various styles and examples have been produced as items of trade by women from communities from the Niagara River to the mouth of the St Lawrence [3]. The impacts of colonialism were felt in dramatic ways for Haudenosaunee people. Through disease, dispossession of land, and imposed gender power imbalance the lives of women were dramatically altered, however they continued to uphold cultural knowledge through their art.

Seed beads became a popular trade item in the early 1700s and began to be applied to leggings, skirts and dresses [4]. Initially most seed beads were produced in Venice, however by the mid-nineteenth century Bohemian (Czech) beads were also traded in North America [5]. This hat displays a typical method of Haudenosaunee raised beadwork, where the beads are applied over a paper pattern which is secured to a velvet backing.

The floral pattern which is the prominent feature of the main three panels of the hat, expresses movement and balance through its use of alternating rows of color in each of the blossoms and leaves as well as the use of asymmetrical forms across a central vine. Floral patterns continue to play an important role in Haudenosaunee beadwork, as they do in the beadwork of other Indigenous nations. In the Haudenosaunee creation story a woman - whose name is sometimes translated Mature Blossom - falls from the sky world. [6] As she falls, she grabs onto the roots and seeds of plants which she brings into our world. The central role of plants in Haudenosaunee worldview and the respect for their continued annual cycles of growth and medicinal powers are expressed through this beadwork. [7]

The fabric lining the hat is cotton, a cloth built on the backs of the North-Atlantic slave trade and the pattern has origins in the fabric of Kashmir shawls. The shawls were the height of fashion in England from the late 1700s to early 1800s. In India this pattern finds its origin in the boteh, buta or kairi, which was appropriated by British textile manufactures, the most well-

known of these textiles came from the town of Paisley in Scotland [8]. Although the cloth and pattern are symbols of colonialism the origin and meaning behind the original boteh create a unique connection between the Haudenosaunee artists and this fabric. The boteh pattern may have been based on the cypress tree and a flower (Boteh means flower in Persian) a symbol of life, eternity, and fertility [9][10] [11].

The style of the hat is an interesting reflection of the mediation between British fashion and Indigenous peoples during the Victorian era. [12] The Glengarry cap or Glengarry bonnet rose in popularity as a reflection of its adoption into British military dress and a fashion for dressing in Scottish attire made popular by Queen Victoria. Although it has been argued that pieces like this were primarily made for display, in this case the sweat damage to the interior lining may indicate that it was a well-worn and loved personal item.[13]

As with many Indigenous art pieces, this hat expresses ideas about worldview, cultural beliefs and lived experiences. Most significantly it has a story to tell us about the adaptability and talent of Haudenosaunee women whose art was an expression of a world deeply impacted by colonialism but still rooted in the values of creation and thanksgiving. Raised beadwork continues to be practiced in Haudenosaunee communities, artist like Nino Perkins, Samuel Thomas, Dakota Brant, and Naomi Smith have continued to adapt to new media and lived realities. Today Haudenosaunee students can be seen wearing beadwork yokes and cuffs to graduations and beadwork has been displayed at the United Nations [14]. The stories, forms and methods continue to be taught in workshops, at kitchen tables and in classrooms across Haudenosaunee territory, physical expressions of our resiliency.

Footnotes:

1. Jolene Rickard, "Visualizing Sovereignty in the Time of Biometric Sensors" in *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Spring, (2011): 466, 478.
2. Jolene Rickard, conversation with author at the Otsego Institute, Cooperstown NY, May 24, 2019.
3. Ruth Philips, *Trading Identities Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900*, (McGill-Queens University Press, 1999):31-38, 223-231.
4. Charles F. Wray, "Seneca Glass Trade Beads C.A.D. 1550-1820" in *Proceedings of the 1982 Glass Trade Bead Conference*, ed. Charles F. Hayes (Research Division of the Rochester Museum & Science Center New York, Rochester, NY, 1983): 47.
4. Elisabeth Tooker, Lewis H. Morgan, on Iroquois Material Culture, (Tuscon, University of Arizona Press, 1994): 234, 200, 254-255.
5. Karlis Karklins, "Guide to the Description and Classification of Glass Beads Found in the Americas" in *Beads Vol 24*, (2012): 64-66.

6. J.N.B. Hewitt, "The Myth of the Earth Grasper," *43 Annual Report, BAE, SI, 1925-26*, (Washington, DC, 1928), Recontextualized by Rick Hill (January 2001):3.
https://www.snpolytechnic.com/sites/default/files/docs/resource/myth_of_the_earth_grasper_2014.pdf
7. There are many variations of this story, some have been recorded by anthropologists and ethnographers and others continue to be shared orally, for more details on comparing these see the work of Dr. Kevin White.
8. Ben Skarratt, "From India to Europe: The Production of the Kashmir Shawl and the Spread of the Paisley Motif" *Oxford University, Global History of Capitalism Project*, ed. Scarlett Mansfield and Christopher McKenna, (2018): 2-3, 5-6.
9. Suzanne Daly, "Kashmir Shawls in Mid-Victorian Novels," *Victorian Literature and Culture* (2002): 247.
10. Jenny Housego, "Kashmiri Embroidery," in *Marg, A Magazine of the Arts*, Vol 58, Iss 4, (2007): 32.
11. Lindsay Barker, "Paisley the Story of a Classic Bohemian Print," *Designed*, November 6th 2017. <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20151021-paisley-behind-rocks-favourite-fashion>
12. Alexandra Kahsenni:io Nahwegahbow " 'Islands of Memory' and Places to Land: Haudenosaunee Beadwork in the Schreiber Collection," in *NGC Review/Revue du MBAC* (2018): 8. <https://ngcr.utpjournals.press/doi/pdf/10.3138/ngcr.9-001>
13. Phillips, Ruth B., "Moccasins into Slippers: Traditions and Transformations in Nineteenth-Century Woodlands Indian Textiles," *Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings*, (1990): 615. <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/tsaconf/615>
14. City of Niagara Falls, "Samuel Thomas - Arts and Culture Wall of Fame," Niagara Falls, <https://niagarafalls.ca/living/arts-and-culture/wall-of-fame/2006-samuel-thomas.acwof>

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