

Labours of Love and Activism on the Prairies: the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative's Artistic  
Production, 1960-1980

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## ABSTRACT

Labours of Love and Activism on the Prairies: the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative's Artistic Production, 1960-1980

Alexandra Nordstrom

Although Indigenous women living on the prairies fostered and maintained prolific creative practices throughout the mid-twentieth century, their work and artistic production is rarely discussed in art historical discourses and/or included within the 'canons' of Indigenous and other art histories. Accordingly, this thesis focuses on the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative (SHC), their artistry, and their work as a community-engaged creative enterprise. I examine how the collective responded to a growing need for economic support in Indigenous communities, especially for Indigenous women, in the context of a developing professional craft sector in Canada. Addressing the intersections between craft, community, home-enterprise, and gendered labour, I argue that the SHC's artistry functioned as a social agent for cultural continuity and economic freedom all the while resisting and challenging assimilation into the colonial society.

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A sincere and heartfelt thank you to the artists of the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative for your beautiful work. Your story, artistry and everyday actions of resistance are an important testament to the transformative power of craft.

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## INTRODUCTION: ESTABLISHING THE SIOUX HANDCRAFT CO-OPERATIVE

Historically, rug hooking was a popular form of folk art practiced in rural communities across North America where seasonally harsh climates persisted and where economic opportunities were limited.<sup>1</sup> Mostly made by women for the home—as gifts or a source of income—hooked rugs were often constructed with found, readily available, and/or recycled materials. The imagery depicted on these rugs varies widely, from scenes out of the maker’s life, to representations of animals, nature, or country-side scenes, as well as abstractions, such as geometric patterns. For many makers and collectors of hooked rugs, these objects speak to both necessity and ingenuity.

In the late 1960s, during times of provincial and national political unrest surrounding both Indigenous and women’s rights, a group of Sioux women from Standing Buffalo Dakota First Nation, a reserve and First Nations band in Saskatchewan, established a small artist co-operative and home enterprise making hooked rugs, which they called the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative (SHC). The practice of hooking rugs opened up an avenue for economic prosperity and created a space in which economic and cultural sovereignty could flourish and grow within their community. The Co-operative provided space for women to come together and craft. It also developed into a wider community-based artists collective and economic venture, which allowed its members to sell their work worldwide as well as participating in local, national, and international exhibitions.

This thesis focuses on the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative, their artistry, and their work as a community-engaged creative enterprise. It investigates how the Indigenous women who formed the collective responded to a growing need for economic support in Indigenous

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Breitner, “Get Hooked,” *Art & Antiquities* 29, no. 9 (2006): 96.



communities, especially for Indigenous women, in the context of a developing professional craft sector in Canada. In so doing, this thesis explores how craft-based artistic production provided different forms of social and financial opportunities in an underserved First Nations community in Saskatchewan. I posit that the Co-operative worked to foster and embody Sioux cultural memory, cultural resurgence, and community-based art practice by adopting the craft-based medium of hooking rugs, contributing to community development and cultural continuity. In broadest terms, I seek to contribute to a growing body of scholarship focused on Indigenous women's artistry, craft production, and home industry in mid-twentieth-century Saskatchewan.<sup>2</sup>

Although Indigenous women living on the prairies fostered and maintained prolific creative practices throughout the mid-twentieth century, their work and artistic production is rarely discussed in art historical discourses or included within the 'canons' of Indigenous and other art histories. Most research done thus far on Indigenous women's art practices and cultural production in Saskatchewan has focused on periods from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the first decades of the twentieth century, or post- 1980, leaving the period between the mid-century to 1980 largely unexplored. While the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative served as a significant site for creative production and contemporary hooked rug making, little scholarly work has been dedicated to the group's practice, and to my knowledge, no exhibition of the group's work has been mounted since 1992.

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<sup>2</sup> See Sandra Alföldy, *Crafting Identity: The Development of Professional Fine Craft in Canada*, 2005; Ian Elliott, "Stupid Not to Include the Arts : The Creation and Evolution of the Saskatchewan Arts Board , 1948-1970" (University of Saskatchewan, 2012); Sandra Flood, "In The Beginning: The Early Years of the Saskatchewan Craft Council," *The Craft Factor* Fall/Winte (2000): 1–10; Gerald McMaster, "Tenuous Lines of Descent: Indian Arts and Crafts of the Reservation Period," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 9, no. 2 (1989): 205–36; Sherry Farrell Racette, "Nimble Fingers and Strong Backs: First Nations and Métis Women in Fur Trade and Rural Economies," in *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labor to Activism*, 2012; Anne Whitelaw, *Spaces and Places for Art: Making Art Institutions in Western Canada, 1912-1990* (Montreal; Kingston; London; Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017); Carol Williams, *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labor to Activism*, 2012, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jahist/jau090>.

Scholars such as Sherry Farrell Racette have acknowledged the absence of Indigenous Women across art historical and other discourses, explaining how this erasure has made even compiling an artist's biographical information—a key and fundamental element of art historiography—difficult. She explains,

For much of Canada's existence as a nation, Aboriginal people have lived as colonized and subjugated non-citizens under strict state control. Lacking the most basic civil rights, Aboriginal women resided in a segregated world, strategically set apart from other Canadians. Their lives were strictly circumscribed and documented (or not) in very different ways ... With such a radical erasure of individual identities, the difficulties of constructing the most basic biographical information on Aboriginal women artists can be significant.<sup>3</sup>

Accordingly, it remains easier to find evidence of Native women's erasure, as opposed to their presence, in scholarship and historical discourse.<sup>4</sup> By the 1960s very few members of Standing Buffalo continued to practice Sioux design as a result of harsh government legislature and policy restricting and suppressing Indigenous language and cultural expression. Therefore, this thesis endeavours to understand the SHC's relationship to the development of professional 'fine' craft in Saskatchewan and Canada at large, as well as to explore the ways in which the Co-operative's practice functioned as an embodiment of Sioux cultural resurgence and continuity that resisted assimilation all the while simultaneously participating in Euro-Canadian capitalist society.

In his 1988 article "Saskatchewan Indian Art: More than Beads and Feathers," Gerald McMaster states that "[t]he generation of modern day Saskatchewan Indian artists begins with Allen Sapp [...] during the 1960's..."<sup>5</sup> In 1968, Sapp's work was exhibited for the time in

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<sup>3</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette, "I Want to Call Their Names in Resistance Writing' Aboriginal Women into Canadian Art History, 1880-1970," in *Rethinking Professionalism: Women and Art in Canada, 1850-1970*, 2012, 286.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Jane Logan McCallum, "Labour, Modernity and the Canadian State: A History of Aboriginal Women and Work in the Mid-Twentieth Century" (University of Manitoba, 2009), 10.

<sup>5</sup> Gerald McMaster, "Saskatchewan Indian Art: More than Beads and Feathers.," *Saskatchewan Indian*, 1988, 13–

Montreal and Saskatoon, and as Ruth Cuthand indicates, “this was the first recognition of an Indian artist in Saskatchewan.”<sup>6</sup> The year following Sapp’s first exhibit, the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative’s work was exhibited in Montreal as well as across Canada, yet little work has been done to acknowledge these women artists in public memory. The ways in which male artists like Sapp have been framed as the forefathers of contemporary Indigenous art in the province demonstrate how critical investigations of Indigenous women’s artistic and cultural production in Saskatchewan, as well as their social and political impacts, have been neglected in art historical and other discourses. Further, the recognition and understanding of Native women’s artistry is complicated to a greater extent by the ways in which their work has been and continues to be categorized by historians and others alike. The discourse surrounding Native women’s artistry has long been conceptualized as belonging to a distant past rather than contemporary culture. Categories such as craft, ethnography, and material culture are, as Farrell Racette argues, “in themselves faceless categories,” which perpetuate the erasure of “women who are already faceless and nameless.”<sup>7</sup>

In a similar vein, the vast majority of scholarship focused on rug hooking has restricted discourse on the medium to the category of folk art, which, like craft, has been predominately associated with the “idea of a traditional, rural cultural environment that has a particular ethnic or racialized identity and that remains set apart from prevailing cultural apparatuses.”<sup>8</sup> In *For Folk’s Sake: Art and Economy in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (2016), Erin Morton argues that “defining folk art in the present as a material output of the past might then involve romanticizing

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<sup>6</sup> Ruth Cuthand, “Art Returns to Indian Society,” *Saskatchewan Indian*, 1988, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Farrell Racette, “‘I Want to Call Their Names in Resistance,’” 288.

<sup>8</sup> Erin Morton, *For Folk’s Sake: Art and Economy in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press/Beaverbrook Canadian Foundation Studies in Art History, 2016), 17–18.

a simpler form of capitalism and people's daily existence within it, or it might demarcate a moment that is in grave danger of disappearing under a more hostile form of capitalism that cannot yet be imagined."<sup>9</sup> However, this perspective does not take into account how 'self-taught' makers adapt to change over time of time.<sup>10</sup>

By closely examining the work of the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative in the context of a developing fine craft sector in Canada, this thesis seeks to fill some of the gaps neglected by these scholars; primarily to expand upon concepts of hooked rugs as forms of cultural continuity and resurgence, and to explore the ways in which hooked rugs, as craft-oriented commodities, were a means of resisting assimilation, while simultaneously participating in Euro-Canadian society. Throughout this thesis I consider the reasons for which the Co-operative's artistry has been left out of art historical and other discourses in addition to exploring how, and to what extent, the SHC's practice speaks to changing ideas surrounding Indigenous cultural identity, sovereignty, and self-determination in colonial Saskatchewan. Ultimately, this thesis works to "honour broader, more inclusive definitions of art and artists, and respect the different ways that communities identify and celebrate artistic achievement."<sup>11</sup>

Examining the SHC and their work calls for an intersectional approach that takes into account issues of gender, labour, class, and colonialism. As such, I utilize and respond to ideas found in the texts of art history, craft, folk art, material culture, labour history, and Indigenous history and feminism. Aligning myself with scholars like Farrell Racette, McCallum, Williams, Elaine Chealsey Paterson, Fiona Hackney, and Elizabeth Garber, I aim to better understand how the group's work embodies facets of Sioux culture and history, functioned as a social agent for

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<sup>9</sup> Morton, *For Folk's Sake: Art and Economy in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia*, 18.

<sup>10</sup> Morton, *For Folk's Sake: Art and Economy in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia*.

<sup>11</sup> Farrell Racette, "'I Want to Call Their Names in Resistance'," 316.

cultural continuity and economic freedom, and the ways in which their making both resisted and challenged assimilation into the colonial society.

The Co-operative emerged alongside a widespread movement aimed at professionalizing the field of craft in Canada. Accordingly, this thesis draws on Sandra Alfoldy's formative work *Crafting Identity: The Development of Professional Fine Craft in Canada* (2005), which traces the history, development, and professionalization of "fine" craft in Canada; and Anne Whitelaw's text *Spaces and Places for Art: Making Art institutions in Western Canada, 1912-1990*, which maps the development of art institutions and organizations in the prairies in addition to exploring the production, circulation, and consumption of art in Canada.

In looking at the SHC as both an artist collective and cottage-industry, or economic enterprise, this thesis adopts a materialist feminist approach to examining labour history where gender, class, and capitalism are concerned. Further, this thesis draws from and builds on scholarship that demonstrates a nuanced approach to materialist feminism where colonialism is also taken into account. While Marxist theory seeks to understand the inequities that emerge from class dynamics within capitalist society, it perceives class disparity as the predominate axis of oppression with a capitalist society.<sup>12</sup> This theoretical approach is limiting as it does not consider other intersecting axes of oppression such as gender, race, and ethnicity. Turning to Rosemary Hennessy and Chrys Ingraham's influential text *Materialist Feminism: A Reader in Class, Difference, and Women's Lives* (1999), a materialist feminist approach (also referred to as socialist or Marxist feminism) critically takes into account and engages with the oppression of capitalism, movements toward social justice, and historical materialism.<sup>13</sup> Materialist feminism

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<sup>12</sup> Rosemary Hennessy and Chrys Ingraham, *Materialist Feminism: A Reader in Class, Difference, and Women's Lives* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 66.

<sup>13</sup> Hennessy and Ingraham, *Materialist Feminism: A Reader in Class, Difference, and Women's Lives*, 4-5.

does not eschew the dismantling of capitalism as a long-term goal; instead, it understands this vision as integral to movements for social justice and transformation. At the same time, feminist materialism engages with the “practical theoretical struggle involved in movements for social change.”<sup>14</sup>

For Hennessy and Ingraham, historical materialism is “emancipatory critical knowledge” that “offers a systemic way of making sense of social life under capitalism that simultaneously serves as an agent for changing it.”<sup>15</sup> By taking into account class dynamics and gender inequalities, and by examining these in tandem, one can unveil popular myths about society and bring to light systemic oppressions. Material feminism is rooted in understanding practical outcomes for those who may be marginalized, and as such this theoretical approach is useful in examining Sioux Handcraft Co-operative and their work by thoroughly considering the historical context in which the artists lived, worked, and operated.

I also draw on the writings and scholarship of Mary Jane McCallum and Carol Williams, who consider how notions of gender, Indigeneity, patriarchy, and capitalism all contribute to the oppression of Indigenous women in their examination of women’s labour, labour history, and Indigenous history. Their work demonstrates the intricate ways in which “marginalization and displacement could and did exist simultaneously with other experiences [...]”<sup>16</sup> While Indigenous women and their work and labour have often been overlooked within labour history because their gender-specific activities and responsibilities did not fall within the conventional characterization of labour production, labour has been used by Indigenous women as a means of both cultural

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<sup>14</sup> Hennessy and Ingraham, *Materialist Feminism: A Reader in Class, Difference, and Women’s Lives*, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Hennessy and Ingraham, *Materialist Feminism: A Reader in Class, Difference, and Women’s Lives*, 4.

<sup>16</sup> McCallum, “Labour, Modernity and the Canadian State: A History of Aboriginal Women and Work in the Mid-Twentieth Century,” 10.

resilience and resistance to the state under modernity.<sup>17</sup> Although McCallum specifically looks at Indigenous women's wage labour, her discussion is important to this thesis and my analysis of the SHC, as cottage-industry and craft practices such as rug hooking—often associated with women's work and domestic activities—also fall outside conventional characterizations of labour where oppression and marginalization exist synonymously with alternative forms of value and agency such as cultural resilience and resistance to colonial assimilation. The writing of Williams echoes this approach as she offers a reconceptualization of Indigenous women's labour and agency, moving beyond the dichotomy of labour located in either public or private spheres.

As such, I honour a broader understanding and conceptualization of labour that includes cottage industry and craft practice in conducting this study of the SHC and their artistry.

Examining the Co-operative and their hooked rugs in this way has the potential to change and challenge how we look at work and labour. As argued by craft scholar Fiona Hackney in her article “Quiet Activism and the New Amateur: The Power of Home and Hobby Crafts” (2013),” craft practices like those of the SHC challenge the pillars of capitalism by “engendering alternative forms of value and social capital.”<sup>18</sup> Examining questions of agency, kinship and community, cultural knowledge, and labour in relation to craft and creative art practices can help us better understand the ways in which Indigenous women navigated and negotiated their roles as artists at this time.<sup>19</sup>

Alongside bibliographic research and intersectional art historical research practice, this thesis is deeply influenced and informed by archival research. To my knowledge, there has yet to

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<sup>17</sup> McCallum, “Labour, Modernity and the Canadian State: A History of Aboriginal Women and Work in the Mid-Twentieth Century”; Williams, *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labor to Activism*, 21.

<sup>18</sup> Fiona Hackney, “Quiet Activism and the New Amateur the Power of Home and Hobby Crafts,” *Design and Culture* 5, no. 2 (2013): 175, <https://doi.org/10.2752/175470813X13638640370733>.

<sup>19</sup> Hackney, “Quiet Activism and the New Amateur the Power of Home and Hobby Crafts,” 172.

be any scholarship dedicated to the SHC, apart from a limited number of exhibition texts including pamphlets and other marketing materials; nor has there been significant efforts dedicated to keep the Co-operative in public memory by government initiatives or local historical and arts organizations. As a result, the first task of this thesis was to retrace the history of the group and their efforts. The most significant collection of primary source material related to the Co-operative is housed in the archives of SK Arts (formerly Saskatchewan Arts Board) in Regina, which I consulted for this thesis. Additional primary source materials include newspaper articles as well as the NFB's documentary film on the Co-operative. This documentation has served as a critical tool in forming the basis of this thesis.

### **Self-in-relation**

I am influenced by the writings of Indigenous scholar Margaret Kovach who argues that sharing one's own story is integral to Indigenous research as it an intentional way to illustrate one's research in relation to their writing.<sup>20</sup> As such, I write from the position of a cis-gendered woman of Plains Cree and Euro-Canadian heritage and a band member of Poundmaker Cree Nation, who grew up in Battleford, Saskatchewan in Treaty 6 territory. My mother is of Ukrainian and German heritage and was raised in a Roman Catholic household in the Battlefords. My maternal grandmother was born to Ukrainian immigrants while my maternal grandfather was born to settlers of German heritage. On my father's side, my grandfather was born to Italian and Swedish immigrants and my grandmother is of Irish heritage. My father is Plains Cree and member of Poundmaker Cree Nation. He was raised in Warmen, Saskatchewan. My paternal grandparents adopted my father in 1973 during the *Sixties Scoop*, a period in which Native children were removed from their families en masse and placed into the child welfare

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<sup>20</sup> Margaret Kovach, "Conversational Method in Indigenous Research," *First Peoples Child & Family Review*, 2019, 15.



system.<sup>21</sup> Many children were “placed, in most cases, into middle-class Euro-Canadian families,” much like my father.<sup>22</sup> Disconnected from my father’s birth parents, I was raised in a predominately white family. I recognize and acknowledge the privilege that my Euro-Canadian family, class, education, and upbringing has afforded me. At the same time, I am aware that I have often been the only First Nations woman in my classes, work environments, and social groups for as long as I can remember. In a continuous complex struggle to locate myself within my own research, Indigenous writing and struggles concerning self-determination and decolonization deeply resonate with me. My knowledge is a situated knowledge informed by Indigenous methodologies, First Nations teachings, and my own experiences as a First Nations woman with a forcibly limited, yet ever-evolving connection to Cree culture.<sup>23</sup> In the words of Kovach, “I situate myself not as a knowledge-keeper—this has not been my path—rather my role is facilitator. I have a responsibility to help create entry points for Indigenous knowledges to come through.”<sup>24</sup>

Divided into two sections, the first section of this thesis makes note of the economic and social benefits that the community-based initiative provided both the Co-operative and their community, exploring the possibilities of equitable resource distribution, collective community planning, and efforts towards economic and social independence. Further, this section examines how the SHC established itself as a community-based enterprise, located both inside and outside of dominant capitalist society. The second section of this thesis outlines and examines the development and professionalization of craft in Canada as well as emerging discourses

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<sup>21</sup> First Nations and Indigenous Studies Program, “Sixties Scoop,” University of British Columbia, 2009, [https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/sixties\\_scoop/](https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/sixties_scoop/).

<sup>22</sup> First Nations and Indigenous Studies Program, “Sixties Scoop.”

<sup>23</sup> Sunseri, “Moving Beyond the Feminism versus the Nationalism Dichotomy,” 143.

<sup>24</sup> Kovach, “Conversational Method in Indigenous Research,” 7.

surrounding the criteria used to characterize 'fine' craft in the mid-twentieth century. I explore how this development took place in the province of Saskatchewan and consider in detail the ways in which key figures and institutions such as the Saskatchewan Arts Board (now SK Arts), Department of Indian Affairs, and the Department of Co-operatives played a significant role in supporting craft practitioners and artists from the Co-operative. Further, I consider how the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative, through their cultural and artistic labour, responded to changes in government policy and available resources.

## QUIET RESISTANCE AND COLOURFUL RESURGENCE

While the conceptualization of Indigenous sovereignty and ideas surrounding the ways in which sovereignty can be actualized as a reality for Indigenous peoples vary, scholars such as Jolene Rickard, David Garneau, Carol Williams, and Lina Sunseri agree that Indigenous sovereignty is community-based.<sup>25</sup> In her book *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labor to Activism* (2012), Williams identifies Indigenous sovereignty as a communal concept that embodies collective wellbeing. Further, Williams asserts that Indigenous sovereignty is “antithetical to capitalism” and dissociated from the nation-state.<sup>26</sup> As Sunseri explains in her article, “Moving Beyond the Feminism versus the Nationalism Dichotomy: An Anti-Colonial Feminist Perspective on Aboriginal Liberation Struggles” (2000), an Indigenous conceptualization of nation “differs from a Western one because its basis for nationhood is not rooted in notions of territoriality, boundaries, and nation-state.”<sup>27</sup> Moreover, nation can signify “a community that may share a common culture and historical experiences” in addition to “a collectivity that is ‘oriented towards the future.’”<sup>28</sup> Echoing the ideas of Williams and Sunseri, I contend that it is important and useful to examine efforts that inspire and propel movement toward Indigenous sovereignty in order understand Indigenous struggles in the pursuit of a self-determined future. As such, in examining the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative (SHC) I align myself

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<sup>25</sup> Jolene Rickard, “Diversifying Sovereignty and the Reception of Indigenous Art,” *Art Journal*, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.2017.1367194>; David Garneau, “Imaginary Spaces of Conciliation and Reconciliation,” *West Coast Line*, 2012; Williams, *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labor to Activism*; Lina Sunseri, “Moving Beyond the Feminism Versus Nationalism Dichotomy: An Anti-Colonial Feminist Perspective on Aboriginal Liberation Struggles,” *Canadian Women Studies* 20, no. 2 (2000): 143–48.

<sup>26</sup> Williams, *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labor to Activism*, 15.

<sup>27</sup> Sunseri, “Moving Beyond the Feminism Versus Nationalism Dichotomy: An Anti-Colonial Feminist Perspective on Aboriginal Liberation Struggles,” 144; Gerald Alfred, *Heeding the Voices of Our Ancestors: Kahnawake Mohawk Politics and the Rise of Native Nationalism* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>28</sup> Sunseri, “Moving Beyond the Feminism Versus Nationalism Dichotomy: An Anti-Colonial Feminist Perspective on Aboriginal Liberation Struggles,” 144; Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation* (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1997), 19.

with Kovach's contestation that "there is a role for both structural change and personal agency in resistance" and that "finding victories in small struggles resists a purist tendency towards an all-or-nothing approach to social transformation."<sup>29</sup>

For the women of Standing Buffalo, the Sioux Handicraft Co-operative (SHC) was a means toward economic sovereignty, but also a way to share traditions of Sioux design, and perpetuate familial, community, and kinship bonds. The idea to establish a rug hooking co-operative emerged from conversations between Martha Tawiyaka, a descendent of Hereditary Chief Standing Buffalo and Elder living on Standing Buffalo reserve, and her friend, Lorna Ferguson, whose husband was the regional supervisor of education of the Fort Qu'Appelle area in the mid 1960s.<sup>30</sup> Appreciating the beadwork of women from the Standing Buffalo community, Ferguson proposed that Sioux design and artistry, articulated through beadwork, could be translated into designs for rug hooking. "She knew that the women of the reserve still had their creative skills in Indian designs that could be adapted into contemporary media."<sup>31</sup> While rug hooking had been practiced by some women in the community, no one had previously incorporated Sioux design into their work. Ferguson's suggestion was embraced by Tawiyaka and others, which resulted in the founding of the Sioux Handicraft Co-operative in 1967.

While participating in the Canadian wage economy through the production and distribution of their artistry, the SHC adopted a co-operative framework to organize their enterprise, which served as an important means of resistance to settler capitalist society. According to Hennessy and Igraham, within capitalist society there remains a focus on individualized success and rigor where "resources that are collectively produced are not

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<sup>29</sup> Kovach, "Conversational Method in Indigenous Research," 80.

<sup>30</sup> The Indian News, "'TAH-HAH-SHEENA,'" *The Indian News*, April 1969, 6.

<sup>31</sup> "'TAH-HAH-SHEENA,'" 6.

collectively controlled or shared.”<sup>32</sup> In contrast, co-operative organizations are owned and governed by their members, emphasizing an equalized distribution of resources and favouring the collective wellbeing of its members over profit maximization.<sup>33</sup> With collective ownership and decision making power, the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative resisted notions of competitive individualism and steep structural hierarchy perpetuated by dominant society in favor of a community-driven practice. Members elected a board of directors responsible for managing the group’s business operations. Members elected to sit on the first board of directors included Josephine Yuzicappi as President, Yvonne Yuzicappi as Vice-President, Mary Yuzicappi as Secretary, as well as Reta Goodwill, Margaret Ryder, and Flora Bear.<sup>34</sup> With the aspiration to manage their own finances and inventory, Goodpipe and Yuzicappi and four of the younger members travelled to Regina on a weekly basis to attend classes in bookkeeping.<sup>35</sup> With some of its own members skilled in the area of bookkeeping, the co-operative held autonomy in allocating funds toward the purchase of materials, workshops and other training, as well as display and marketing costs for the collective.

In addition to instituting an equitable economic structure for its members, the Co-operative created and established significant leadership positions that served to ground the group’s activities in Sioux culture and worldview. Five Elders and other senior members of the Co-op—Martha Tawiyaka, Mary Laswisse, Lucy Yuzicappi, Jessie Goodwill, and Marina Goodfeather (ages seventy to ninety-two years old)—were employed as design consultants by

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<sup>32</sup> Hennessy and Ingraham, *Materialist Feminism: A Reader in Class, Difference, and Women’s Lives*, 4.

<sup>33</sup> Kristin Wiksell, “Campaigning for Cooperatives as Resistance to Neoliberal Capitalism,” *Journal of Political Power* 10, no. 2 (2017): 237, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2158379X.2017.1335837>.

<sup>34</sup> Joan Henson, *Standing Buffalo* (Canada: National Film Board of Canada, 1968), [https://www.nfb.ca/film/standing\\_buffalo/](https://www.nfb.ca/film/standing_buffalo/).

<sup>35</sup> Henson, *Standing Buffalo*; The Western Producer, “Indian Co-Operative Preserves Traditions,” *The Western Producer*, 1969; The Indian News, ““TAH-HAH-SHEENA””; Suzanne Probe, “Ta-Hah-Sheena: Sioux Rugs from Standing Buffalo Reserve” (Regina, SK, 1988).

the Co-operative (Fig. 1). Considering that “cultural longevity depends on the ability to sustain cultural knowledges,” the role of design consultants was integral in ensuring Sioux customs and the customs of the Sanding Buffalo community were respected by the group.<sup>36</sup> Together, the consultants created a robust collection of resource materials for the artists to work with by hand-drawing and translating design patterns from memory, thus supplying members of the Co-op with endless ideas and inspiration for rug design (Fig. 2). The consultants also extended their first-hand expertise in teaching Sioux design through workshops to members of the SHC and participants from the wider community. In her text “Craft as Activism” (2013), Elizabeth Garber asserts that craft carries within it a transformative potential.<sup>37</sup> Along the same lines, Hackney argues that in order to understand craft as a socially engaged practice, we must turn to and examine “the practices, networks, meanings, and values” associated with making.<sup>38</sup> According to Garber, “craft [is often] positioned outside the mainstream of late capitalist consumer society” as the style of training is often informal and the practice is often engaged with what is considered everyday life.<sup>39</sup> As these artists engaged with craft-based craft practices directed toward social change and/or grounded in resistance, they can therefore be understood as activists.<sup>40</sup> Marked by concerted, caring, and rigorous peer-to-peer mentorship and skill sharing, the intergenerational transmission of knowledge presented through the guidance and supervision of the consultants positioned the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative apart from mainstream capitalism. In this way, the Co-operative’s rug making can be understood as a socially engaged practice, both growing from and strengthening a foundation of community and collective engagement.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Kovach, “Conversational Method in Indigenous Research,” 12.

<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Garber, “Craft As Activism,” *The Journal of Social Theory in Art Education* 54, no. 33 (2013): 57.

<sup>38</sup> Hackney, “Quiet Activism and the New Amateur the Power of Home and Hobby Crafts,” 171.

<sup>39</sup> Garber, “Craft As Activism,” 54-55.

<sup>40</sup> Garber, “Craft As Activism,” 54.

<sup>41</sup> Garber, “Craft As Activism,” 55. For Garber, craft linked to activism “...can be understood both as an occupation and a way of life that involves participatory or substantive democracy in which socially equal and reflective

Photographs from archives of the Saskatchewan Arts Board picture Josephine Goodpipe, Rose Buffalo, and Flora Bear crafting their rugs (Figs. 3, 4). The artists are shown immersed in their making practices as they focus on the works in-progress laid out before them. Curled under Goodpipe's right index finger is a latch hook: a small handheld tool rug hookers use to pull and hook loops of yarn through burlap canvas. With her hook in hand, Goodpipe positions a design pattern on top of her work as she scrutinizes her progress. Meanwhile, Buffalo inspects the detail of her artistry as Bear continues to hook wool knots onto her burlap canvas. Hand drawings of Sioux imagery and design made by the design consultants paint the backdrop for each photo, capturing a glimpse of the artists' creative process. Furthermore, these images capture the ways in which the Co-operative engaged in community-based learning and a shared making practice.

It is important to note that in the recent history of this country, now known as Canada, government legislative and administrative practices prior to the 1950s directly suppressed native languages and cultural expression, and by the 1960s only a few members of Standing Buffalo were practicing Sioux design and traditional art forms.<sup>42</sup> As assimilative policies and the residential school system severely limited opportunities on the reserve, people were forced to either leave their community or become self-employed.<sup>43</sup> As a result, the transmission of cultural knowledge was interrupted in many different ways for Indigenous communities. This is significant because as Kovach argues, “[t]he act of sharing through personal narrative, teaching story, and general conversation is a method by which each generation is accountable to the next in transmitting knowledge.”<sup>44</sup>

After careful consideration, the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative named their rugs *Ta-hah-*

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individuals contribute to building ‘a sense of community, of association, of neighboring and joining’.”

<sup>42</sup> Probe, “Ta-Hah-Sheena: Sioux Rugs from Standing Buffalo Reserve,” 5.

<sup>43</sup> Kelly M O’Neil, “Native Women and Micro-Enterprise,” *Canadian Woman Studies* 15, no. 1 (1994): 55-56.

<sup>44</sup> Kovach, “Conversational Method in Indigenous Research,” 12-14.

*Sheena*—a Sioux word used to describe decorated or painted animal hides worn during ceremony and social gatherings (Fig. 5). When not in use, the hides would be used as tapestries to adorn the inside walls of the tipi, which also functioned as an additional layer of insulation throughout cold Saskatchewan winters.<sup>45</sup> Most Ta-hah-Sheena rugs made by SHC members measured three square feet and while they were originally intended to serve as area rugs, most were displayed as wall tapestries much like traditional Sioux painted hides. Resembling the physical size of tradition Sioux painted hides, some rugs were made much larger and measured up to twenty-four square feet (Fig. 6).<sup>46</sup> Phonetically, the word *Ta-hah-Sheena* linked the SHC’s contemporary rug hooking to an ancestral form of Sioux tapestry. As “language holds within it a people’s worldview,” it is significant that the Co-operative foregrounded Sioux language in their artistry.<sup>47</sup> Not only did the Co-operative honour Sioux language, in naming their hooked rugs *Ta-hah-Sheena* the group also privileges Sioux worldview and knowledge systems.<sup>48</sup>

In his book *The Canadian Sioux* (2004), anthropologist James Howard recounts the shared concern among members of Standing Buffalo and Wahpeton Dakota First Nation (formerly Round Plain) “with the loss of Sioux identity as expressed by the use of the Dakota language.”<sup>49</sup> Expressing his concern about the loss of the Dakota language, member of Standing Buffalo Joseph Goodwill states,

The young people here no longer speak Dakota in public. They may understand it, but they won’t try to use it themselves. The boys are more reluctant to speak Indian than the girls, somehow. The people at Sioux Valley are more Indian in this respect. I visited over there and was surprised to hear even little fellows talking Sioux.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> The Indian News, “TAH-HAH-SHEENA,” 6.

<sup>46</sup> The Western Producer, “Indian Co-Operative Preserves Traditions”; Saskatchewan Arts Board, “Sioux Handcraft: Ta-Hah-Sheena” (Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1969).

<sup>47</sup> Kovach, “Conversational Method in Indigenous Research,” 59.

<sup>48</sup> Kovach, “Conversational Method in Indigenous Research,” 59.

<sup>49</sup> Howard, *The Canadian Sioux*, 176.

<sup>50</sup> Howard, *The Canadian Sioux*, 176.



As a means of expressing worldview, language is self-reflexive. It is “powerful because it reminds us who we are; it is deeply entwined with personal and cultural identity.”<sup>51</sup> Strongly connected to language is the ability to share story. Kovach explains how stories help us to understand our own identities in relation to our kin and communities, connecting us to our cultural ancestry all the while building a foundation for continuity with generations to come.<sup>52</sup> As both method and meaning, “story works as a decolonizing action that gives voice”<sup>53</sup> and while women’s roles as storytellers have been afforded respect within Indigenous history, colonial records consistently minimize testimonies of their labour.<sup>54</sup> Accordingly, the embodiment of language and story as culturally specific ways of knowing by the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative served as critical instruments in the group’s struggle toward Indigenous sovereignty.

As bearers of cultural memory, direction from the Co-operative’s design consultants was essential in contributing to the quality and integrity of Sioux design.<sup>55</sup> Where Sioux customs required that symbols and imagery reserved for ceremonial objects be distinguished and housed separately from designs used in traditional day-to-day clothing, the consultants ensured that this custom was followed so that ceremonial design would remain distinct from Ta-Hah-Sheena rug and/or tapestry design. In other circumstances consultants embraced different ways of expanding upon cultural tradition. While natural dyes traditionally used by the Sioux were limited in colour variety, the artists decided to broaden their colour palette by purchasing commercially dyed yarns spun from natural wools (Figs. 7, 8, 9).<sup>56</sup> Some Elders expressed reservations about using the

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<sup>51</sup> Kovach, “Conversational Method in Indigenous Research,” 69.

<sup>52</sup> Kovach, “Conversational Method in Indigenous Research,” 94.

<sup>53</sup> Kovach, “Conversational Method in Indigenous Research,” 98.

<sup>54</sup> Kovach, “Conversational Method in Indigenous Research,” 98; Williams, *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labor to Activism*, 8.

<sup>55</sup> Probe, “Ta-Hah-Sheena: Sioux Rugs from Standing Buffalo Reserve,” 7.

<sup>56</sup> Carrie Hunter, “Tapestry Show Good in Banff,” *Herald Banff Bureau*, 1971.

colour black in particular, as it was considered by some to be sacred.<sup>57</sup> This hesitancy may account for why black yarn is only used as an outline or accent in the rugs of the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative. Nonetheless, the use of commercially dyed yarn provided artists new ways to both imagine and materialize their Ta-Hah-Sheena designs.

Fabricated with vibrant colours to form a geometric polychrome design, Florence Maple's *Tipi Mat* (1967) is a vibrant example of how artists of the Co-operative embodied contemporary interpretations of ancestral knowledge and Sioux culture in their work (Fig. 10).<sup>58</sup> Measuring a square 68.6 cm by 68.6 cm, a border of crimson red yarn frames the rug. In the centre of the work, narrow rows of green yarn are hooked to outline the shape of a cross. While outlined in green, the body of the cross is filled with violet coloured yarn. Tiny multicoloured squares are speckled over the violet colouring to form a geometric mosaic. White yarn articulates negative space between the red frame and the cross while small, deep purple squares are positioned symmetrically in each corner of the rug. As an important symbol in Sioux worldview, Howard explains how the equal-armed cross often represents or refers to the four directions, the four winds, or the corners of the universe.<sup>59</sup> On this imagery Howard states,

each point of the cross has its own color symbol, white for north, red for east, yellow for south, and blue or black for west. Each of the two arms of the cross is also symbolic. The arm extending from east to west is called *chaŋkú dúta*, the 'red road,' the path of good. The arm extending from south to north is the *chaŋkú sápa*, the 'black road,' the path of war and calamity. Both roads are traveled during life, and although the red road is the better and the preferred path, the warrior must travel the black road to protect his family and tribe.<sup>60</sup>

The cross rendered in Maple's *Tipi Mat* can be viewed in relation to the symbol of the equal-armed, or symmetrical cross as described by Howard. While the arms of Maple's cross are not all

<sup>57</sup> Probe, "Ta-Hah-Sheena: Sioux Rugs from Standing Buffalo Reserve," 7; Howard, *The Canadian Sioux*, 67.

<sup>58</sup> Florence Maple (1922-2000) was the daughter of Yvonne Yuzicappi (also member of the SHC).

<sup>59</sup> Howard, *The Canadian Sioux*, 96–97.

<sup>60</sup> Howard, *The Canadian Sioux*, 96–97. John G. Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks, Black Elk Speaks*, 2014.

equal in width, the horizontal arms of the cross are narrower than the vertical ones, her cross is bilaterally symmetric on both vertical and horizontal planes. Placed in contrast to stark white yarn, the four dark purple squares draw attention to the four corners of the work, creating a visual link to the concept of the four corners of the universe mentioned by Howard. Further, Maple incorporates white, red, yellow and blue coloured yarn within her tapestry, possibly alluding to the four directions symbolized by these four colours. In this way, we can begin to understand how elements of Sioux knowledge and worldview are reflected in Maple's work.

Yvonne Yuzicappi also draws on important Sioux symbols to convey spiritual ideas in the design of her *Untitled* tapestry constructed in 1968 (Fig. 11). A recorded description of Yuzicappi's work by Lorna Ferguson states,

The four crosses in the centre of this design represent four stars. They are bordered by four gold 'hills'. The star figure was common to all the plains Indian Tribes and had a supernatural meaning. As the Morning of Evening Star it was considered to represent very powerful spirits, with protective powers to whom prayers were often addressed.<sup>61</sup>

Both Maple and Yuzicappi foreground story in their work by evoking symbols that represent facets of Sioux worldview. Moreover, the geometric austerity articulated through their designs resembles meticulous border designs achieved in quill and beadwork on women's and children's leggings.<sup>62</sup> In this way, Maple and Yuzicappi connect their contemporary rug hooking to other art practices such as quillwork and beading, thus demonstrating the ways in which ancestral knowledge is both retained and transmitted through craft practice.

In what is currently known as Canada, Indigenous peoples have been confronted with various forms of cultural imperialism that have been, in many instances, authorized and enforced by government policy and law. In her article "Can Capitalism be Decolonized? Re-entering

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<sup>61</sup> Probe, "Ta-Hah-Sheena: Sioux Rugs from Standing Buffalo Reserve," 7.

<sup>62</sup> Probe, "Ta-Hah-Sheena: Sioux Rugs from Standing Buffalo Reserve"; The Western Producer, "Indian Co-Operative Preserves Traditions."; Saskatchewan Arts Board, "Sioux Handcraft: Ta-Hah-Sheena."

Indigenous Peoples, Values, and Ways of Life in the Canadian Art Market” (2019), Solen Roth recounts the ways in which leaders of Canadian industry were encouraged to appropriate Indigenous artistry in order to establish and advertise a “distinctly Canadian” brand to advance the country’s economy in the first half of the twentieth century. The appropriation of Indigenous art and design disregarded Indigenous intellectual property systems and further, no action was taken to ensure that images, objects, and knowledges would return to their original communities. Roth further points out that throughout the twentieth century, as the government and other organizations took a greater interest developing arts and crafts initiatives in Indigenous communities, almost no effort was dedicated to developing policy aimed at protecting Indigenous language, culture, or intellectual property.<sup>63</sup>

Concerned with significant threats of cultural suppression and erasure as well as appropriation of Indigenous artistry, the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative sought to protect their designs and artistry. To defend their work from appropriation, Sioux Handcraft labels included the artists’ names, signatures, and identification numbers, which were sewn onto the back side of each finished rug a means to ensure it’s “authenticity” as being crafted by a member of the Co-operative.<sup>64</sup> Jessie Goodwill’s *Untitled* work has a SHC label sewn onto a corner on the reverse side of her work (Fig. 12). The label reads “Tapestry Rugs in Unique Sioux Indian Designs and Symbols.” The following line of text declares the maker of the work, with a space for the artist’s handwritten signature. The lower half of the label states the incorporated name of the Co-operative followed by the group’s mailing address. In addition to signing their work, each artist

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<sup>63</sup> Solen Roth, “Can Capitalism Be Decolonized? Recentring Indigenous Peoples, Values, and Ways of Life in the Canadian Art Market,” *American Indian Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (2019): 313, <https://doi.org/10.5250/amerindiquar.43.3.0306>. Roth further argues that cultural imperialism enmeshed with economic imperialism in the sense that “Canadian property laws were seen to supersede Indigenous ones, thereby contributing to thwart Indigenous communities’ efforts to prosper from their own cultural resources.”

<sup>64</sup> Probe, “Ta-Hah-Sheena: Sioux Rugs from Standing Buffalo Reserve,” 7.

would construct their own deliberate mark or error in the rug's pattern so that she would be able to identify it as her own—a symbolic marker of identity.<sup>65</sup> These marks often involved placing a few strands of coloured yarn into a different colored section of the design. The practice of deliberately placing a flaw within one's artwork is a tradition that was practiced by some Sioux bead workers. Wayne Goodwill, a member of Standing Buffalo, recounts hearing “older people say that every item of beadwork should have an odd bead, that is, a bead that is obviously of the wrong color or out of place in the design.”<sup>66</sup> This custom stems from the understanding that only Wakháŋ Tháŋka (God) is immaculate, thus it is presumptuous of one to aim for perfection in their work.<sup>67</sup> Tied to oral history and Sioux customs, this practice was unique to each individual artist. The Co-operative also kept detailed records of each rug made, accompanied by a small hand-drawing of the design, and patterns were not used more than once, which allowed each rug to be unique in its own way.<sup>68</sup> Here, the SHC was able to monitor the circulation of their own designs as well as protect Sioux intellectual history and knowledges.

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<sup>65</sup> Probe, “Ta-Hah-Sheena: Sioux Rugs from Standing Buffalo Reserve,” 7; Howard, *The Canadian Sioux*, 67.

<sup>66</sup> Howard, *The Canadian Sioux*, 67. Accounts of this tradition vary from family to family.

<sup>67</sup> Howard, *The Canadian Sioux*, 67.

<sup>68</sup> Probe, “Ta-Hah-Sheena: Sioux Rugs from Standing Buffalo Reserve.”

## CRAFTING THE PROFESSIONAL ARTIST IN CANADA

The professionalization of craft and the development of national and regional organizations and governmental programs stand as significant components in the formation of the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative (SHC) and in linking their artistic production with economic enterprise. In the late nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth century, oppressive laws and legislature enforced by the Canadian government through the Indian Act<sup>69</sup> and its amendments prohibited the freedom of cultural expression for First Nations peoples while at the same time imposing strict programs of forced assimilation.<sup>70</sup> Curator Suzanne Probe of the Dunlop Gallery in Regina explains how the Indian Act impacted the Standing Buffalo community:

Decades of sedentary reserve life and the inevitable effects of modernization diminished the necessity for handcrafting objects in a traditional manner. To add to this, government legislative and administrative practises prior to the 1950s directly suppressed native languages and cultural expression. By the 1960s, on Standing Buffalo Reserve, only a small number of residents were still practising traditional decoration. Beadwork items were made for use in Sioux dances and ceremonies and as souvenirs for tourists.<sup>71</sup>

Opposed to the Department of Indian Affairs' policies sanctioning the assimilation of Indigenous peoples, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, originally formed in 1902 as Women's Art Association of Canada (WAAC) in Montreal, played an important role in making space for Indigenous arts and crafts under such a strict and imposing policy. In 1902, the group opened a small storefront to sell Indigenous homemade crafts and by 1906, the Guild openly aimed to

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<sup>69</sup> Bonita Lawrence, "Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States: An Overview," *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 18, no. 2 (2003): 3, <https://doi.org/10.2979/hyp.2003.18.2.3>. Lawrence continues to explain how "The Indian Act in Canada, in this respect, is much more than a body of laws that for over a century have controlled every aspect of Indian life. As a regulatory regime, the Indian Act provides ways of understanding Native identity, organizing a conceptual framework that has shaped contemporary Native life in ways that are now so familiar as to almost seem 'natural.'"

<sup>70</sup> McMaster, "Tenuous Lines of Descent: Indian Arts and Crafts of the Reservation Period," 216; Racette, "'I Want to Call Their Names in Resistance Writing' Aboriginal Women into Canadian Art History, 1880-1970," 229. It remained illegal for Indigenous peoples to engage with or participate in ceremony and other forms of cultural expression. For instance, those caught engaging in Potlatch ceremonies could be imprisoned from two to six months.

<sup>71</sup> Probe, "Ta-Hah-Sheena: Sioux Rugs from Standing Buffalo Reserve," 5.

promote, retain, and develop a widespread market for Indigenous handicrafts and home art production. The Guild's Ottawa branch first sent Amelia MacLean Paget to travel to First Nations communities and reserves in Saskatchewan in 1912. Here, Paget encouraged Indigenous women—and Indigenous children residing in residential schools—to continue producing their traditional crafts.<sup>72</sup> Following her trip to Saskatchewan, Paget advised the Department to locate someone who teach handicrafts at the Lebret (Saskatchewan) Industrial School. The Department eventually accepted Paget's recommendation and agreed to find someone to fill the role.<sup>73</sup> Following Paget's visit, the Department began actively planning and facilitating "Indian exhibits" at industrial and agriculture fairs in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta in the 1920s.<sup>74</sup> With different motives from the Guild, McMaster argues that these government sanctioned exhibitions were executed with the purposed goal of assimilation, encouraging First Nations students to contribute to arts and crafts cultural production but under rigid state supervision and structure.<sup>75</sup> In the 1930s, the Guild began taking direct political action to defend forms of Indigenous cultural expression and in 1933, Alice Lighthall "established the Guild's Indian Committee to work not only for the preservation of Indian arts and crafts, but for amendments to the Indian Act."<sup>76</sup> Continual and persistent pressure from the Guild eventually influenced the Department to assume a growing interest in the production of Indian arts and crafts, however focussing almost exclusively on the economic potential.<sup>77</sup> The Department of Indian Affairs was restructured in 1936 under the Department of Mines and Resources. Under

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<sup>72</sup> Ellen Easton McLeod, "In Good Hands: The Women of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild," *Woman's Art Journal* 21, no. 2 (2000): 220, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1358772>; McMaster, "Tenuous Lines of Descent: Indian Arts and Crafts of the Reservation Period."

<sup>73</sup> McMaster, "Tenuous Lines of Descent: Indian Arts and Crafts of the Reservation Period," 211.

<sup>74</sup> McMaster, "Tenuous Lines of Descent: Indian Arts and Crafts of the Reservation Period," 210.

<sup>75</sup> McMaster, "Tenuous Lines of Descent: Indian Arts and Crafts of the Reservation Period," 208.

<sup>76</sup> McLeod, "In Good Hands: The Women of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild," 221.

<sup>77</sup> Farrell Racette, "'I Want to Call Their Names in Resistance'," 309.

this reorganization, the Welfare and Training division was appointed responsible for agricultural operations as well as arts and crafts production and sales.<sup>78</sup> McMaster notes that this strategy was meant to provide Indigenous peoples with a means of “economic self-sufficiency,” however, as Farrell Racette points out, “this entry into marketing corresponded with a time of great poverty in Aboriginal communities,” thus leaving cultural production under strict control of the Department.<sup>79</sup> With a primary focus on economic prosperity under control of the Department, Indigenous cultural production became increasingly preoccupied with the production and manufacture of “curios,” or souvenir art.<sup>80</sup>

Prior to 1940, the manufacture and production of curios, small art objects that could be sold to tourists, was an important source of income for many Indigenous folks. However, both Lighthall and Paget of the Guild expressed and emphasized the importance for Native artists to return to traditional, authentic craft. On Paget’s and Lighthall’s travels from Montreal to Alberta and Saskatchewan, Ellen Easton McLeod remarks, “the Montreal women [from the Guild] regarded most highly the Indian objects whose design, techniques, materials, and workmanship they considered ‘pure Indian.’ They viewed objects with no European influence as more ‘authentic,’ even though this attitude marginalized [the] contemporary Indian experience.”<sup>81</sup> Here, Paget and Lighthall failed to acknowledge how Indigenous cultural and creative practice

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<sup>78</sup> McMaster, “Tenuous Lines of Descent,” 210; Farrell Racette, “‘I Want to Call Their Names in Resistance,’” 309.

<sup>79</sup> McMaster, “Tenuous Lines of Descent: Indian Arts and Crafts of the Reservation Period,” 210; Racette, “‘I Want to Call Their Names in Resistance Writing’ Aboriginal Women into Canadian Art History, 1880-1970,” 309.

<sup>80</sup> Racette, “‘I Want to Call Their Names in Resistance Writing’ Aboriginal Women into Canadian Art History, 1880-1970,” 309. Also see Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900* (Seattle: University of Washington Press; Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 1998), 228-54; Trudy Nicks, “Indian Villages and Entertainments: Setting the Stage for Tourist Souvenir Sales,” in *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, ed. Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 301-15; Trudy Nicks, *The Creative Tradition, Indian Handicraft and Tourist Art* (Edmonton: Royal Alberta Art Museum, 1982).

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<sup>81</sup>McLeod, “In Good Hands: The Women of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild,” 210..



had transformed in order to adjust to shifting realities under colonialism.<sup>82</sup> While Paget and Lighthall argued that “authentic” native craft must not have any European influence, everyday women’s arts of the prairies, going back to the nineteenth century, were valued in both Indigenous and European traditions and practices; they provided a space for values from diverse cultural heritages to interlace.<sup>83</sup> Paget’s and Lighthall’s assessment of notions of tradition and authenticity in relation to Native craft reflected the narrow perspective of Indigenous artwork and creative practice at the time, a perspective that continues to be upheld. Rather than connecting current Native artistry and creative practice to past cultural traditions, their desire for a “return” positioned native women artists and their work distinctly in the past, antithetical to the contemporary artwork. Moreover, their conception of authenticity did not focus on work made by Native people, instead it reflected a generic and homogenized view of what Native craft should be according to settler standards. While misguided, the Guild’s concern with the “quality” of craft was echoed among many and would be a larger topic of debate in years to come as other craft-focussed groups, organizations, and institutions emerged provincially and nationally.

The first half of the twentieth century marked a period of far-reaching poverty in many Indigenous and smaller rural communities throughout Saskatchewan. As the necessity for economic growth persisted, the Guild’s desire to revitalize craft work was echoed throughout the province and other groups became increasingly concerned with reviving interest and participation in arts and cultural production. Groups like the Saskatoon Arts and Crafts Society emerged, aiming to both acknowledge the high quality of work by senior artists and to tackle the “profound poverty in many communities by organizing exhibitions and sales of traditional and

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<sup>82</sup> Carmen Robertson, “Land and Beaded Identity: Shaping Art Histories of Indigenous Women of the Flatland,” *RACAR : Revue d’art Canadienne* 42, no. 2 (2018): 15–16, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1042943ar>.

<sup>83</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette, “Sewing for a Living: The Commodification of Métis Women’s Artistic Production,” in *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada’s Colonial Past*, 2005, 22.

contemporary arts.”<sup>84</sup> The Royal Canadian Academy of Arts also exhibited work by Indigenous women as early as 1943, however, the works chosen for display were shown as examples of a highly skilled yet “generic arts practice.”<sup>85</sup> This widespread interest and effort to show and exhibit work was marked by the view that forming cultural institutions would permit many areas, large and small, to grow their communities.<sup>86</sup> With an increased emphasis on and interest in the production of handcraft as well as the development of groups that would support and facilitate creative production, there was also a growing concern to improve the quality of the handmade arts and to professionalize the area of craft as its own field of expertise.

As the Saskatchewan section of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) diversified provincial industry, the province relied less heavily on agriculture, which permitted both economic growth as well as funding allocated toward arts and cultural development. This allowed economic growth in the province, funding and interest was being put into arts and cultural development throughout the province. By 1948 the Saskatchewan Arts Board (SAB)<sup>87</sup> emerged as the primary funding body for cultural production. Moreover, the SAB also developed programming to support cultural production and activities throughout the province.<sup>88</sup> Established under the leadership of the Saskatchewan section of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, the establishment of the Arts Board was regarded as a way of making opportunities for creative practice and activities, and significantly, took focus on raising the qualities of these

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<sup>84</sup> Racette, “‘I Want to Call Their Names in Resistance Writing’ Aboriginal Women into Canadian Art History, 1880-1970,” 310.

<sup>85</sup> Racette, “‘I Want to Call Their Names in Resistance Writing’ Aboriginal Women into Canadian Art History, 1880-1970,” 310.

<sup>86</sup> Whitelaw, *Spaces and Places for Art: Making Art Institutions in Western Canada, 1912-1990*, 57.

<sup>87</sup> In May 2020, the Saskatchewan Arts Board changed their name to SK Arts (pronounced “Sask Arts”).

<sup>88</sup> Whitelaw, *Spaces and Places for Art: Making Art Institutions in Western Canada, 1912-1990*, 60. Whitelaw notes that the SAB is “often described as the first government art council in Canada and the reason why American art luminaries such as Barnett Newman and Clement Greenberg were enticed to lead workshops at Regina College’s Emma Lake facilities in the 1950s.”

events for the province by providing cultural organizations with financial and professional support.<sup>89</sup> Working with the National Gallery of Canada and the Western Canada Art Circuit, the SAB organized and circulated exhibitions throughout the province in addition to organizing juried exhibitions of work by Saskatchewanian artists, which the Arts Board would make purchases from to grow their permanent collection and to hold traveling shows in the future.<sup>90</sup> Here, the SAB emerged as the central sponsor for arts activity in Saskatchewan, predominantly dedicated to, and successful in supporting a wide variety of cultural activities, “from theatre and music to craft and the fine arts,” by assisting local groups in smaller communities.<sup>91</sup>

At the forefront of these conversations in Saskatchewan was Norah McCullough (1903-1993). As the director of the Arts Board, McCullough’s primary goal was to grow cultural development and awareness throughout the province.<sup>92</sup> McCullough worked with smaller rural groups and communities to establish numerous craft-based projects. One of her first endeavours in Saskatchewan involved establishing a domestic enterprise program.<sup>93</sup> She advertised calls for artists in small, rural towns, and in turn, her efforts encouraged numerous individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds to develop and promote their creative work. McCullough’s emphasis on inclusivity garnered significant support within rural communities and groups for the Arts Board, and by 1968 she “had established the SAB as a craft-inclusive educational, funding and exhibition body.”<sup>94</sup>

While McCullough’s focus on craft-based initiatives and projects substantially influenced

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<sup>89</sup> Whitelaw, *Spaces and Places for Art*, 60.

<sup>90</sup> Whitelaw, *Spaces and Places for Art: Making Art Institutions in Western Canada, 1912-1990*, 60.

<sup>91</sup> The Saskatchewan Arts Board remained the central sponsor for arts activity until the provinces first galleries opened in Saskatoon and Regina in the mid-1950s. See Whitelaw, *Spaces and Places for Art: Making Art Institutions in Western Canada, 1912-1990*, 60.

<sup>92</sup> Alfoldy, “Norah McCullough: Pioneering Professional Craft in Canada,” 38.

<sup>93</sup> Erin Morton, “Bordering the Vernacular: J. Russell Harper and the Pursuit of a ‘People’s Art,’” *Journal of Canadian Art History* 34, no. 1 (2013): 98–101.

<sup>94</sup> Alfoldy, “Norah McCullough: Pioneering Professional Craft in Canada,” 35-39.

the SAB and handcraft in Saskatchewan, she also contributed significantly to the national discourse surrounding the development of a professional “fine” craft in Canada.<sup>95</sup> The professionalization of craft as its own autonomous field took place notably in the 1960s and 1970s on both a national and international scale. In part, Canadian craft was largely influenced by the American Craft Council as well as ideas put forth at the First World Congress of Craftsmen held June 8-19, 1964 at Columbia University in New York, which McCullough attended as an appointed representative of the National Gallery of Canada. Under the guidance of Aileen Osborne Webb, the American Craft Council had already developed a well institutionalized framework for craft production that bore heavy influence on Canadian professionals who attended the Congress. “The enthusiastic response to their views led the American Craft Council and the World of Crafts Council to seek to institutionalize their national modernist narrative and make it the official description of the international craft world.”<sup>96</sup> Two notable Americans who contributed to this discussion were René d’Harnoncourt, Director of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and writer Harold Rosenberg. While both figures agreed on evaluating crafts as “fine” art, they “excluded the non-professional” and failed to acknowledge amateur craft practice.<sup>97</sup> While the field of fine craft had been established and institutionalized in America in a similar way to fine art, craft in Canada struggled to occupy the same professional space.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Alfoldy, *Crafting Identity: The Development of Professional Fine Craft in Canada*, 4. The methods of classifying craft can be traced back to the introduction of the word “fine” into craft vernacular. “In the 1950s, actively identifying craft as “fine” was perceived as distinguishing it from the non-professional objects that cluttered the field. Donald Buchanan made this point explicitly in his writing on Canadian craft and design and through his meaningful use of the term “fine” in his craft exhibitions at the National Gallery of Canada. For Buchanan, craft had a responsibility to work with industry, both to overcome the division between the two and to aid postwar Canada in creating a supply of well-designed, mass-produced objects to replace wartime shortages. By simply inserting the term “fine,” loaded with overt references to the “fine” arts, it was believed that the crafts could be elevated.”

<sup>96</sup> Alfoldy, “Norah McCullough: Pioneering Professional Craft in Canada,” 41.

<sup>97</sup> Alfoldy, “Norah McCullough: Pioneering Professional Craft in Canada,” 41.

<sup>98</sup> Alfoldy, “Norah McCullough: Pioneering Professional Craft in Canada,” 41-42.

Many Canadian delegates took an interest in the Congress's focus on non-traditional crafts and as Alföldy suggests, McCullough had been selected to represent the National Gallery of Canada because it was thought "she represented a shift toward the new and she was also aware of the professional standards promoted by many Canadian craftspeople."<sup>99</sup> However, following the conference, McCullough returned to the Canada, caught in a precarious position. While she thought that the professionalization of the field was necessary in order to increase the quality of Canadian Crafts and for craft to be taken seriously as a 'fine' art, "McCullough was careful to appear to be inclusive of non-professional craftspeople."<sup>100</sup> She did not want to discourage artists who may fall outside the newly developed categories of professional craft. In carving out professional space for Canadian crafts all the while attempting to maintain a level of inclusivity, McCullough's approach was to focus on education in the art community in Saskatchewan and make available resources for artists to hone their skill, develop the quality of their work, in addition to exhibiting and selling their work.

Immediately after the Congress in 1964, McCullough thought Canada needed a national organization dedicated to supporting Canadian craft production and through the Saskatchewan Arts Board, she made recommendations for a national organization to work with the Worlds Crafts Council.<sup>101</sup> While seeking response and input from Canadian crafts people, she still "urged Canadians to keep the new organization open to artist-designers, rural and folk designers, and amateurs as well as enthusiastic laypeople."<sup>102</sup> Following the FWCC in 1964, McCullough founded a new national craft organization, the Canadian Craftsmen's Association in 1965. On McCullough's efforts to combat the exclusivity brought about by professional standards, Alföldy

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<sup>99</sup> Alföldy, "Norah McCullough: Pioneering Professional Craft in Canada," 42.

<sup>100</sup> Alföldy, "Norah McCullough: Pioneering Professional Craft in Canada," 43.

<sup>101</sup> Alföldy, "Norah McCullough: Pioneering Professional Craft in Canada," 43.

<sup>102</sup> Alföldy, "Norah McCullough: Pioneering Professional Craft in Canada," 44.

remarks, “During the peak of modernist sensibilities McCullough had boldly promoted and curated exhibitions of marginalized materials, including folk art and the crafts. Her desire for including both professional and amateur artistic production was certainly at odds with the realities of organizing some of the first juried exhibitions of the highest quality crafts.”<sup>103</sup>

While efforts lead by McCullough supported makers and groups such as the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative by providing resources to develop and expand their creative practice, it is argued by Morton in her article “Bordering the Vernacular: J. Russell Harper and the Pursuit of a ‘People’s Art’” (2013), that McCullough’s focus on developing Canadian craft and folk art closely aligned with wider state-driven efforts to expand the post-war Canadian economy. For instance, Morton explains,

the Canadian federal state of the late 1960s and early 1970s saw integration as necessary to quell Québécois nationalism, to cope with the arrival of non- European immigrants, and to assimilate Indigenous populations who were then increasingly resisting colonialist claims to ancestral lands.<sup>104</sup>

Accordingly, it was in the interest of the Canadian state to locate artists who could reflect a specific image of agrarian industrial expansion to urban Canadian centres in order to promote a unified national identity.<sup>105</sup> McCullough’s work was not divorced from a state-lead colonial agenda that privileged “Eurocentric notions of a national past tied to the colonial settling and working of the land.”<sup>106</sup> Morton argues that McCullough adopted an anthropological and

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<sup>103</sup> Alföldy, “Norah McCullough: Pioneering Professional Craft in Canada,” 35. Although McCullough resigned from her position as chair of the Canadian Craftmen’s Association in 1966, Alföldy notes that “A profound shift in ideology was signaled by the emphasis on professionalism that emerged under her leadership during the formation of the Canadian Craftmen’s Association. As a professional arts administrator, McCullough played a significant role in the institution of new ideals for Canadian crafts on both the national and international stage. Her dedication to the frequency of marginalized crafts, as witnessed by her initiatives to institutionalize the field, continues to impact upon today’s crafts people and administrators.”

<sup>104</sup> Morton, “Bordering the Vernacular: J. Russell Harper and the Pursuit of a ‘People’s Art,’” 104.

<sup>105</sup> Morton, “Bordering the Vernacular: J. Russell Harper and the Pursuit of a ‘People’s Art,’” 98–101.

<sup>106</sup> Morton, “Bordering the Vernacular: J. Russell Harper and the Pursuit of a ‘People’s Art,’” 105.

ethnographic framework in developing craft and folk art discourses, further reinforcing notions of Indigenous primitivism.<sup>107</sup>

While McCullough's efforts did create the foundation for craft to be taken seriously as professional fine art, Farrell Racette posits that "the historical construction of the 'professional artist' is also problematic, since the term 'professional' is tightly bound to European economic and social structures and 'artist' is a deeply gendered occupational category."<sup>108</sup> Further, First Nations peoples were still marginalized by the professionalization and institutionalization of the field, as their skills and methods were often viewed as outmoded, and training for Native crafts often lay outside large institutional frameworks.<sup>109</sup> This especially rings true/is prevalent for Indigenous women artists as "female art practices were, and continue to be, marked by rigorous mentorship, evaluation, and public display."<sup>110</sup> While the work of the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative follows the trajectory of the development of a professional "fine" craft, their artistic process and collective falls outside characterized institutional frameworks.<sup>111</sup> An important element of the SHC's work was a communal learning process that was taught by mentorship between older and younger members of the collective. However, with previous experience with cottage and home industry projects, the SAB supported the method of training, providing the group with their very first loan to train members of the Co-op in Sioux design and rug hooking.<sup>112</sup> Following this funding from the Arts Board, the Co-operative received grant money from the

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<sup>107</sup> Morton, "Bordering the Vernacular: J. Russell Harper and the Pursuit of a 'People's Art,'" 101.

<sup>108</sup> Farrell Racette, "I Want to Call Their Names in Resistance," 287; Also see Kristina Huneault and Janice Anderson, *Rethinking Professionalism: Women and Art in Canada, 1850-1970*, *Rethinking Professionalism: Women and Art in Canada*, 1850-1970, 2012, 4.

<sup>109</sup> Alfoldy, *Crafting Identity: The Development of Professional Fine Craft in Canada*, 8; Morton, "Bordering the Vernacular: J. Russell Harper and the Pursuit of a 'People's Art,'" 100-101.

<sup>110</sup> Racette, "I Want to Call Their Names in Resistance Writing' Aboriginal Women into Canadian Art History, 1880-1970," 287-288.

<sup>111</sup> Hackney argues that the intellectualization of fine craft has developed in tandem to the denigration of amateur making or "hobby" craft.

<sup>112</sup> The Indian News, "TAH-HAH-SHEENA," 6.

Economic Division of the Department of Indian Affairs to fund the group in purchasing materials like wool and burlap.<sup>113</sup> However, to emerge as an enterprise under the economic structures of the province, members of the SHC were encouraged to take courses in record keeping and accounting which was funded by the Provincial Department of Co-operatives. The Provincial Department of Co-operatives also provided the group with support “in the area of co-operative information and methods of co-ordinating activities.”<sup>114</sup> The funding and support provided to the Co-op reflects the fact that, in the eyes of the government, Indigenous arts “continued to be linked with welfare, training, and employment.”<sup>115</sup>

Farrell Racette notes that First Nations women artists were overlooked in some ways as the government primarily placed their efforts into turning “men into ‘professional artists’ as an employment strategy,” arguing that “finding employment for men was made a priority and women artists undermined this employment strategy if they left their domestic sphere.”<sup>116</sup> This perspective is demonstrated in the National Film Board of Canada’s Documentary *Standing Buffalo* (1968). The film captures a business meeting arranged by some of the younger women of the community who acted as directors of the Co-op, including Mrs. Josephine Yuzicappi as President; Yvonne Yuzicappi, Vice-President; Mary Yuzicappi, Secretary; Reta Goodwill, Margaret Ryder and Flora Bear, alongside representatives from the Department of Co-operation as the group is seeking to obtain a loan to expand the handcraft business. The meeting takes place in a domestic setting, in a family home with a handful of Co-op members, all male representatives from the Department of Co-operation, and some children present. In the film, the

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<sup>113</sup> The Indian News, “TAH-HAH-SHEENA,” 6.

<sup>114</sup> The Indian News, “TAH-HAH-SHEENA,” 6.

<sup>115</sup> Racette, “‘I Want to Call Their Names in Resistance Writing’ Aboriginal Women into Canadian Art History, 1880-1970,” 312.

<sup>116</sup> Racette, “‘I Want to Call Their Names in Resistance Writing’ Aboriginal Women into Canadian Art History, 1880-1970,” 312.



Department representatives appear to be unimpressed by the presence of children at their meeting. As the meeting is officially called into order, a letter of communications with a representative from Ottawa is read aloud. The members seek to understand the reasons for which their loan has not yet been approved and a Department representative informs the group that their loan application requires a more explicit and definite description of what they'd like to do with the loan before the government could grant them any reasonable sum of money. Further, the representatives inform the Co-op that members require additional training to be granted a loan to expand their business. One member expresses her frustration in having to jump leaps and bounds to receive financial help from the government.<sup>117</sup> Her concern and frustration further illustrates a struggle endured by members of the group to be considered professional artists with a legitimate business enterprise.

Farrell Racette argues that “over time, the discourse of the Department of Indian Affairs had pushed women out of the category of “artist” and shifted it onto men.”<sup>118</sup> The emphasis placed on developing men as “professional artists” is evident at Expo 67 where the Cultural Affairs Section of the Department of Indian Affairs (established 1965) predominately recognized and promoted First Nations men as contemporary artists. The Cultural Affairs Section selected nine male artists to create eight murals for the Indians of Canada Pavilion in addition to two Inuit men. Farrell Racette indicates that Expo 67 marked Native men's entry into an international art world. While some women were asked to take part in Expo 67, such as Buffy Sainte-Marie and Daphne Odjig, the majority of Indigenous artists who held leadership or positions of influence were male, such as Bill Redi, Charles Gladstone, and Charles Edenshaw. First Nations women

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<sup>117</sup> Henson, *Standing Buffalo*.

<sup>118</sup> Racette, “‘I Want to Call Their Names in Resistance Writing’ Aboriginal Women into Canadian Art History, 1880-1970,” 310.

were continuously tied to traditional native arts production and making. In addition to not being recognized as contemporary artists, Native women's participation in Expo 67 was confined to rigid gendered roles. For instance, thirteen First Nations women (ages 18-25) were chosen to act as "hostesses" for the Indian Pavilion. Yves Thériault, the head of the Cultural Affairs Section of Indian Affairs, planned training in the areas of hospitality and personal grooming, with the goal of "making these hostesses the very embodiment of what an Indian can be."<sup>119</sup> Here, First Nations women were firmly excluded from opportunities to present themselves as contemporary artists.

Despite these considerable barriers, remarkably, the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative was renowned, having their works shown across the country and internationally.<sup>120</sup> Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s the SHC's work was heavily exhibited in smaller shows throughout Saskatchewan as well as in larger travelling exhibitions and galleries in Regina, Saskatoon, Montreal, Toronto, New York, Europe, Japan, and Australia.<sup>121</sup> In addition to the 1969 documentary film featuring the SHC produced by the National Film Board of Canada, the Lippel Art Gallery in Montreal was one of the group's largest exhibitions having been supported by Alanis Obomsawin, "a well-known Indian folk singer of the Abenaki tribe near Montreal."<sup>122</sup> According to the article "Tah-Hah-Sheena" published in April 1969 issue of *The Indian News*, as of 1969 the Co-op had sold a large number of their hooked rugs through this exhibition.<sup>123</sup> The rugs crafted by the Sioux Handicraft Co-operative were purchased by both private buyers and collectors as well as institutions. Records from the Saskatchewan Arts Board show that a

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<sup>119</sup> Myra Rutherford and Jim Miller, "'It's Our Country': First Nations' Participation in the Indian Pavilion at Expo 67," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 17, no. 2 (2007): 162, <https://doi.org/10.7202/016594ar>.

<sup>120</sup> Probe, "Ta-Hah-Sheena: Sioux Rugs from Standing Buffalo Reserve," 7-8; Rutherford and Miller, "'It's Our Country': First Nations' Participation in the Indian Pavilion at Expo 67," 162-64.

<sup>121</sup> *The Indian News*, "'TAH-HAH-SHEENA,'" 6.

<sup>122</sup> *The Indian News*, "'TAH-HAH-SHEENA,'" 6.

<sup>123</sup> *The Indian News*, "'TAH-HAH-SHEENA,'" 6.

significant number of rugs were purchased by the SAB and were circulated in various small exhibitions organized by the Arts Board throughout the province.

## CONCLUSION

While the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative achieved considerable success in sales and distribution, in my research I have found little documentation archived from these exhibitions apart from NFB's film and a few newspaper articles, making it difficult to retrace circulation and reception of SHC's work. To my knowledge, the most recent group exhibition of the SHC's work opened in 1992 at Wanuskewin Heritage Park in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan entitled "Sharing the Circle: Contemporary Work by First Nations Artists" that opened. Most recently in 2015, works by Florence Ryder, a member of the collective, were included in the Textile Museum of Canada's exhibition "Home Economics: 150 Years of Canadian Hooked Rugs" for the Textile Museum of Canada's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This touring exhibition explored "the unique stories and histories that have informed hooked rugs in Canada" and featured "over 100 hooked rugs from the Museums rich archive of international material culture," representing "generations of artisanal entrepreneurship, women's domestic and collective work, as well as rural development in Canada."<sup>124</sup> However, this show only incorporated rugs from the museum's permanent collection; minimal focus was placed on Ryder's work and the exhibition was absent of a detailed discussion of her work in relation to the SHC as a whole.

The founding and establishment of the Co-operative signifies an important transition for craft-based art in Saskatchewan as well as nationally, reflecting the transition and perception of Native craft work from curios to professional art all the while occupying a precarious position both inside and outside existing and developing institutionalized frameworks as a co-operative and artist collective managed by Sioux women. While native women's exclusion from

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<sup>124</sup> Textile Museum of Canada, *Home Economics: 150 Years of Canadian Hooked Rugs* (Toronto, Ontario: Textile Museum of Canada, 2015).

contemporary fine arts in the twentieth century and their absence in art historical discourse is significant, examining the emergence of the SHC alongside the development of professional craft demonstrates the importance of Native women's artistry within local and provincial cultural development and economies. Even though the categories of craft and folk art and their connotations with the domestic sphere, both historically and in the current moment, were in many ways considered to be a form of making associated and coded with symbol and notions of historical rural life, the success and reception of the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative's work speaks to its contemporary significance as a form of artistry in the twentieth-century and further, reflects the ways in which portrayals of Indigenous experience were transforming within a colonial landscape.

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## FIGURES



Figure 1 – Photograph of Jessie Goodwill and Lucy Yuzicapi, two design consultants of the Co-operative working on Ta-Hah-Sheena rugs/tapestries, Standing Buffalo Dakota First Nation, Saskatchewan. 1969. Artist Case Files 1300-55, Folder Jessie Goodwill, SK Arts Permanent Collection, Regina, Saskatchewan.



Figure 2 – Photograph of Florence Maple, Elizabeth Yuzicappi, and Joyce Goodwill (l-r) working on Ta-Hah-Sheena rugs/tapestries, Standing Buffalo Dakota First Nation, Saskatchewan. Showing detail of design patterns posted to the walls. Date unknown. N 68.12, SK Arts Permanent Collection, Regina, Saskatchewan.



Figure 3 – Graphic Photo Studio. Photograph of Josephine Goodpipe, Rose Buffalo, Flora Bear (l-r), Standing Buffalo Dakota First Nation, Saskatchewan. Date unknown. N 68.6, 7149-2, SK Arts Permanent Collection, Regina, Saskatchewan.



Figure 4 – Graphic Photo Studio. Photograph of Josephine Goodpipe, Rose Buffalo, Flora Bear (l-r), Standing Buffalo Dakota First Nation, Saskatchewan. Date unknown. N 68.6, 7149-3, SK Arts Permanent Collection, Regina, Saskatchewan.



Figure 5 – Tatanka Iyotake (Sitting Bull). Buffalo Robe. Ca. 1877–1881. Pigment on American bison hide. Image Source: State Historical Society of North Dakota, 10117, Canadian Art, Toronto, Ontario, accessed May 14, 2020, <https://canadianart.ca/news/extremely-rare-buffalo-robe-painted-by-sitting-bull-returns-to-saskatchewan/>.



Figure 6 – Evelyn Yuzicappi. *Untitled*. Ca. 1968. 121.9 x 182.9 cm. Ta-Hah-Sheena rug/tapestry. N 70.3, SK Arts Permanent Collection, Regina, Saskatchewan. Photo by Alexandra Nordstrom, August 12, 2019. Printed with permission from SK Arts.



Figure 7 – Evelyn Yuzicappi. *Untitled*. Ca. 1968. 121.9 x 182.9 cm. Ta-Hah-Sheena rug/tapestry. Showing detail of bright coloured commercial yarns. N 70.3, SK Arts Permanent Collection, Regina, Saskatchewan. Photo by Alexandra Nordstrom, August 12, 2019. Printed with permission from SK Arts.



Figure 8 – Florence Maple. *Tipi Mat*. 1967. Ta-Hah-Sheena rug/tapestry. Showing detail of bright coloured commercial yarns. N 68.3, SK Arts Permanent Collection, Regina, Saskatchewan. Photo by Alexandra Nordstrom, August 12, 2019. Printed with permission from SK Arts.





Figure 9 – Jessie Goodwill. *Untitled*. Date unknown. Ta-Hah-Sheena rug/tapestry. Showing detail of bright coloured commercial yarns. N 68.12, 67072H, SK Arts Permanent Collection, Regina, Saskatchewan. Photo by Alexandra Nordstrom, August 13, 2019. Printed with permission from SK Arts.



Figure 10 – Florence Maple. *Tipi Mat*. 1967. Ta-Hah-Sheena rug/tapestry. N 68.3, 6701C, SK Arts Permanent Collection, Regina, Saskatchewan. Photo by Alexandra Nordstrom, August 12, 2019. Printed with permission from SK Arts.



Figure 11 – Yvonne Yuzicappi. *Untitled*. 1968. Ta-Hah-Sheena rug/tapestry. N 72.3, 68053H. SK Arts Permanent Collection, Regina, Saskatchewan. Printed with permission from SK Arts.



Figure 12 – Jessie Goodwill. *Untitled*. Date unknown. Ta-Hah-Sheena rug/tapestry. N 68.12, 67072HH, SK Arts Permanent Collection, Regina, Saskatchewan. Photo by Alexandra Nordstrom, August 13, 2019. Printed with permission from SK Arts.