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A map of the Native Northeast, depicting the network of waterways that connect the peoples who live in this region.¹

A Note on Names

Throughout this work I use the terms “indigenous” or “Native” to refer to the indigenous peoples of the United States and Canada. Whenever possible, I have included specific names of the communities and people I discuss.

The Wampanoag, whose name means “People of the First Light,” today comprises three primary groups, Mashpee, Aquinnah, and Manomet, as well as several others. The homelands of the Wampanoag Nation covered the territory along the east coast as far as Wessagusset (today called Weymouth, Massachusetts), all of what is now Cape Cod and the islands of Natucket and Noepe (now called Nantucket and Martha’s Vineyard), and southeast as far as Pokanocket (now Bristol and Warren, Rhode Island).²

The term Anishinaabe means “original people” and refers to multiple Native Nations, but this study focuses on two specific peoples: the Odawa (sometimes spelled Ottawa) and the Ojibwe (sometimes spelled Ojibwa; the term “Chippewa” is also used).³ Anishinaabe homelands covered the Great Lakes region, where the Odawa and Ojibwe people continue to live today.

Wabanaki, which means “People of the Dawnland,” is a confederacy of five Native Nations: Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, Micmac, and Abenaki.⁴ Wabanaki homelands include areas of present-day New Hampshire, Maine, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Québec.

Introduction

Around 1750, Chickens Warrups, a Native leader of an amalgamated Pequannock and Paugussett community located in both Lonetown, Connecticut and Schaghticoke, New York, traveled to Danbury, Connecticut with an array of Native crafts for sale. The goods he brought included baskets, wooden buckets and troughs, wooden bowls, spoons, mats, brooms, hides, and dugout canoes. When he peddled these items, he made enough money to purchase food, blankets, and shoes at a local shop to bring home to his community of extended relations.

More than a half century later, in 1821, hundreds of Anishinaabe people arrived in birchbark canoes on the shore of Michilimackinac, Michigan with rush mats, quilled moccasins, bark baskets filled with maple sugar, shot pouches, and other goods. They sold these “articles of curiosity” to the inhabitants of the island, who included Euro-American missionaries, traders, government officials, and visitors to the scenic Great Lakes region. In exchange, they received dry goods, clothing, and other necessities, with which they fed and clothed their families.

Throughout the 1880s, Tomah Joseph, a Passamaquoddy birchbark artist from Peter Dana Point, Maine, loaded his canoe with ash splint and birchbark baskets and journeyed through Wabanaki homelands to Campobello Island, New Brunswick at the beginning of every summer. He stayed there for the season, selling his work as well as that of other Wabanaki artists to the wealthy summer residents of the island. In early autumn, he returned home with the money he

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6 Ibid., 200-201.
earned to his wife, Hanna Lewey, and son, Sabattis, who lived on the present-day Motahkomikuk (Indian Township) Reservation.8

These anecdotes, drawn from three different historic moments and regions in the Native Northeast, tell parallel stories about indigenous persistence through material culture. The objects Native people crafted for sale to non-Native settlers and tourists helped ensure their economic and cultural survival through the present day. Faced with the increasing presence of settlers, the illegal sale or seizure of their homelands, and assimilationist policies in the United States and Canada, indigenous communities developed innovative methods of resistance. One method was the adaptation of traditional objects, such as wooden burl bowls and birchbark baskets. Through the creation and sale of these items, Native people preserved crafting practices and followed traditional subsistence patterns as they confronted colonialism.

This study explores indigenous history through these objects, many of which exist in museum collections today. When placed in conversation with the written record, material culture provides new ways of seeing and understanding indigenous presence in the Northeast. The editors of the 2015 collection Tangible Things: Making History Through Objects argue that “just about any tangible thing can be pressed into service as primary historical evidence….physical things can reveal connections among people, processes, and forms of inquiry that might otherwise remain unnoticed.”9 These material records of the past include all human-made or modified items. With these sources, historians “may uncover what would otherwise be undetectable lives, often of the socially disadvantaged.”10

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10 Ibid., 18.
marginalize Native communities, or worse, ignore their presence entirely. Material culture helps make these communities visible. Studying indigenous objects as primary sources can give voices to millions of Native people whose perspectives and stories are rarely prioritized by historians who begin and end their search for evidence in libraries and archives. My project combines material sources with documentary records, ethnographic sources, and oral traditions to convey a fuller picture of Native history. This interdisciplinary historical methodology emphasizes Native people as central actors in evolving relationships between indigenous communities and non-Native colonists and governments.

In the Northeast and particularly New England, the “vanishing Indian” myth contributed to the erasure of Native communities in the historic record. In *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England*, Ojibwe ethnohistorian Jean O’Brien argues that European Americans used the genre of local histories to assert their own modernity while denying it to Native people.¹¹ She uses these town histories alongside censuses, monuments, and accounts of historic pageants and commemorations to demonstrate how European-descended New Englanders created the myth of Native extinction after the seventeenth century. Yet while her approach looks to unusual sources to find evidence of Native people, she does not make object-based interventions into these histories. My study extends this approach by reexamining not only material culture, but also sources such as probate records, which have conventionally been used to write Euro-American histories, to discern Native presence and persistence.

This work explores three locales in the Native Northeast. The “Native Northeast” is an extended network of waterways and trails encompassing Wabanaki people and places in the east,

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Anishinaabe in the west, and Wampanoag in the south. In the twenty-first century, these groups continue to live in and outside of their traditional homelands. Historically, each faced either removal policies, shrinking land-bases, or both, but these Native communities nonetheless survived. This work places these communities at the center of the region’s history and present. It enters into conversation with scholars like Abenaki literary historian Lisa Brooks, who reframed Native territories in her book, *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast*. Brooks used a methodology “rooted in [her] own land-based experiences,” which were “not an abstraction...but a physical, actual, material relationship to an ‘ecosystem present in a definable place.’”¹² By recovering and reexamining Algonquian and Iroquoian texts, Brooks showed that writing was not a foreign European technology, but rather a crucial weapon with longstanding internal indigenous roots, used to resist colonial domination. In addition to literary pushback, Native people also resisted through their material culture, which they created with resources they gathered from these tangible ecosystems in definable places. From the birchbark that Anishinaabe and Wabanaki people harvested, folded, and sewed to create baskets to the tree burls that Wampanoag people removed, burned, and scraped to make bowls, the use of natural resources represented an expert environmental awareness, cultivated over multiple generations. The paths along which indigenous people traveled to market and sell these objects constituted established and familiar Native geographies. Like Brooks, I root my project in these specific Native environments and places.

My study focuses on three sets of objects. The first chapter looks at a seventeenth-century Wampanoag burl bowl, a progenitor of the wooden bowls Chickens Warrups peddled in the mid-

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eighteenth century. The bowl is currently held in the collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston, Massachusetts, an institution with colonial origins that has continued to present it as a symbol of Native extinction in New England. When examined alongside other wooden bowls, extant in museum collections and recorded by probate inventories, this bowl helps reveal a more complex story of the Native people in Massachusetts who endured the devastating aftermath of King Philip’s War (1675-1678). This Native-colonial conflict was one of a series of wars, born of a multifaceted indigenous resistance movement that continued well into the eighteenth century. The Native communities who survived King Philip’s War faced erasure in the nineteenth century as colonial historians constructed the “vanishing Indian” myth and attempted to write them out of modernity. Yet we know these communities existed in part because they appear by way of their objects. Native-made items, such as the baskets, bowls, brooms, and dugout canoes Warrups sold, populate the account books of colonial shopkeepers who sold them and the probate inventories of colonial settlers who used and displayed them—yet these important sources have rarely been mined by scholars to ask probing questions about indigenous survival and adaptation. I argue that studying the presence of these objects in the eighty-year period following King Philip’s War dismantles the Massachusetts Historical Society’s iteration of the “vanishing Indian” myth, which the institution propagates through their story of the burl bowl.

The second chapter focuses on a single object—an Anishinaabe miniature mokuk, or birchbark basket, created in the 1820s for sale to Euro-Americans—to explore how and why indigenous people in the Great Lakes region adapted their material culture to an emerging souvenir marketplace. A missionary associated with the Mount Holyoke Female Seminary purchased the mokuk from an Anishinaabe artist and donated it to the school, where it remains in
the collections of the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum. Until recently, the mokuk had received little attention from campus curators or researchers. Yet when read as a historic source, the miniature mokuk reveals indigenous agency in the midst of “civilizing” forces, which stemmed from institutions such as the missionary school established on Michilimackinac Island and government-sponsored policies of land loss. The Anishinaabe artist who crafted the miniature basket from birchbark, cedar, and porcupine quills also filled it with a few tablespoons of maple sugar. Anishinaabe people transformed their traditional patterns of resource use in the nineteenth century to make a living in the capitalist economy that the U.S. government attempted to impose on them. The souvenirs they created showcased Anishinaabe artistry and craftsmanship, while enabling them to support their families and communities. Tracing the miniature mokuk to Michilimackinac, where the founder of Mount Holyoke, Mary Lyon, had connections to several missionary families living on the island, the second chapter demonstrates how historians can use objects to uncover different stories of indigenous people and places. Through the close reading of one souvenir, whose provenience information was largely unknown before my research began, I show how seemingly common objects can tell complex stories of indigenous resistance and survival.\(^{13}\)

The third chapter explores three of Tomah Joseph’s birchbark items: a molocessinut, or glove box, a wikhikoninut, or picture frame, and a tulehpinut, or playing card box. These items are presently held by two Massachusetts museums: the Boston Children’s Museum in Boston and the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem. With these objects, Joseph preserved Passamaquoddy oral traditions and lifeways for future generations of Wabanaki people. The imposition of the

\(^{13}\) Provenience information are the records associated with objects that describe their creators, donors, materials, and more. These records include information given by donors as well as original research done by museums or researchers.
Canadian-United States border along the St. Croix River, which runs through the center of Passamaquoddy homelands, as well as the state of Maine’s ongoing violation of Wabanaki treaty rights and sovereignty, contributed to political, social, and economic disfranchisement among tribal members. Joseph was politically engaged, serving as tribal governor for at least one term and writing letters to the Maine state government, and he opposed these colonial policies in multiple ways. He continued to travel through Passamaquoddy homelands to hunt, fish, gather resources, and sell his baskets. The birchbark art he created was also a tool for resistance, as he employed wikhegan, the practice of writing on birchbark, to assert political and cultural legitimacy to American and Canadian consumers. The molocessinut depicted Passamaquoddy lifeways for non-Native people, reminding them of Wabanaki presence in Maine. The wikhikoninut contained a picture of Joseph as Passamaquoddy governor, proclaiming Wabanaki sovereignty through a combination of English writing and animal pictorials that represented different clans. Finally, the tulehpinut portrayed a scene from the story of Koluscap, the Wabanaki culture hero, and Pukcinsquehs, a sorceress, transmitting Passamaquoddy oral tradition through imagery. Analyzing these three objects alongside indigenous writings, I suggest that Joseph and other Wabanaki activists successfully challenged ethnographers’ and government officials’ attempts to define the Wabanaki through a narrative of Native decline and extinction.

None of these objects is fixed in the past. In addition to close readings of their origin and initial circulation, I also explore how museums have collected, conserved, or displayed indigenous material culture. I do so with the intent to identify routes for decolonizing these practices. “Decolonization” is the process of reversing colonialism, both politically and culturally. Colonialism has unfolded in many parts of the world. In North America, the enduring existence of settler colonialism—the process of colonizing one territory through the permanent
settlement of families from another territory, with the *acquisition* of land as a primary
objective—means that decolonization must take place within a context that is still profoundly
colonial. In museums, whose practices of collecting and exhibiting indigenous artifacts are
closely tied to the colonization process itself, “decolonizing methodologies” include
relinquishing power over objects and implementing shared authority. As indigenous scholar Amy
Lonetree outlined in *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and
Tribal Museums*, new relationships of shared authority invite Native people to actively
collaborate with museums when developing exhibitions, storing or displaying sacred objects, and
conserving indigenous material culture.\footnote{Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums*, 1.}
Museums are steeped in Western ways of knowing, naming, ordering, analyzing, and understanding the world, and indigenous people, alongside
many non-Native scholars and advocates, have struggled to foreground the colonial nature of
these frameworks in order to challenge and dismantle them.\footnote{Sonya Atalay, “No Sense of the Struggle: Creating a Context for Survivance at the NMAI,”
*American Indian Quarterly* 30, no. 3/4, Special Issue: Decolonizing Archaeology (Summer-
Autumn 2006), 597.}

The passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990 was a major milestone for Native rights in museums. NAGPRA called for federal
agencies and federally funded museums to return human remains and associated funerary objects
upon the request of lineal descents, Native Hawaiian organizations, or federally recognize Indian
tribes.\footnote{Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums*, 18.}
The law also included provisions for addressing cultural patrimony, items belonging *to a
group* and inalienable by any particular person, and sacred items, ceremonial objects that Native
communities continue to use in the practice of traditional religions.\footnote{“NAGPRA Glossary,” National Park Service, Department of the Interior, accessed April 2016,
https://www.nps.gov/nagpra/TRAINING/GLOSSARY.HTM.}
decolonization certainly includes repatriation. Yet decolonization does not end with NAGPRA. Abenaki scholar Margaret Bruchac has called upon museums to undertake restorative methodologies, which include examining and revising past practices that led to the misplacement of thousands of indigenous human remains.\(^\text{18}\) These methodologies are not limited to repatriation. “Museums have an ethical responsibility to make an honest attempt to fix what was broken by their own actions,” Bruchac advocates, “irrespective of legal obligations.”\(^\text{19}\) A major step towards decolonization is making indigenous material culture that is technically ineligible for repatriation accessible to Native communities. Short or long-term object loans to Native groups or museums is one method of fostering accessibility, but even more than that, decolonization aims to ensure Native people can have control over the conservation, storage, and display of their material culture through deep collaboration over the *longue durée*.

My project applies these methodologies to each set of objects, proposing several possibilities for decolonization. These possibilities are by no means exhaustive, and represent preliminary steps to take towards a decolonized museum and public history practice. The process of decolonization in museums revolves around long-term collaboration with indigenous communities. In the first chapter, I propose that the Massachusetts Historical Society invite Wampanoag communities to revise their interpretation of the burl bowl, implementing shared authority by facilitating indigenous control over the historic narrative. The second chapter challenges museums’ constructions of indigenous souvenirs as inauthentic. I call upon these museums to consult with Anishinaabe communities in order to display souvenir items in exhibits that represent both the context of colonialism and indigenous agency. Finally, the third chapter


\(^{19}\) Ibid., 150.
examines how the process of loaning Joseph’s objects to the Abbe Museum in Bar Harbor, Maine for a temporary exhibit entitled *Coming Home* enabled Wabanaki communities to access his birchbark art. I recommend that museums that hold Joseph’s objects continue this process by loaning them to Wabanaki communities on long-term bases.

My collaborative experiences in the museum field in the past several years have informed my research approach. As a summer 2015 curatorial intern with the Wampanoag Indigenous Program at Plimoth Plantation, a living history museum in Plymouth, Massachusetts, I worked with the reproductions collections, which contained objects created onsite by indigenous staff. I returned in January 2016 to research the *Thanksgiving: Memory, Myth & Meaning* exhibit that ran from 2002-2008 and displayed the burl bowl from the Massachusetts Historical Society. My conversations with museum staff over the summer and in January influenced the content of my first chapter. As a student in Lisa Brooks’ Mellon Seminar “The Place of Memory: Engaging History in the Digital World” at Amherst College during Spring Semester 2015, I visited the Massachusetts Historical Society, where I viewed the burl bowl and conducted research on it using the society’s records. I also worked as an intern at the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum in South Hadley, Massachusetts during the 2015 and 2016 academic years, where I assisted the NAGPRA Coordinator with repatriation and research on indigenous material culture holdings, particularly souvenir objects. During the fall semester of 2015, I helped coordinate two collection spotlights at the museum. As the curator of *Converging Cultures: Native America and the Early Tourist Market*, I showcased three indigenous souvenirs, including the miniature *mokuk*, and demonstrated how Native artists drew from traditional practices to create a new genre of art that they sold to survive within the capitalist economy. My interest in souvenir objects began as a summer 2014 curatorial intern at the Museums of Old York in York, Maine,
which is an institution focused on Euro-American history with several Wabanaki baskets in its collections. I also helped coordinate another spotlight at the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, *People Will Know Our Names*, which complemented a concurrent exhibition *Dancers of the Nightway: Ceremonial Imagery in Navajo Weaving*. Curated by Lynda Teller Pete, a fifth-generation weaver from the Newcomb and Two Grey Hills areas of the Navajo Nation, this spotlight focused on a circa 1935-1940 Diné/Navajo weaving of Yei figures. The process of inviting Teller Pete as curator and meeting her when she came to Mount Holyoke to give a gallery talk solidified my commitment to a decolonizing practice that is “with, for, and by” indigenous communities, as archaeologist George Nicholas has characterized these collaborative dynamics.20 I have also visited multiple museums throughout the Northeast with the aid of a Pugh research grant from the Mount Holyoke College History Department, including the Abbe Museum in Bar Harbor, Maine, the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., the Huron-Wendat Museum in Wendat, Québec, and more. These site-visits, and the conversations that I had with curators and community members, inspired me and formed a baseline for my comparative analyses.

These analyses seek to prioritize the experiences and demands of indigenous communities. The words of Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, whose seminal book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* explores avenues for reclaiming indigenous control over ways of knowing and being, ground the significance of indigenous access to objects and control over their interpretation.

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Every issue has been approached by indigenous peoples with a view to rewriting and rerighting our position in history. Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes. It is not simply about giving an oral account or a genealogical naming of the land and the events which raged over it, but a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying.21

The indigenous material culture presently residing in museum collections suggests at least two avenues toward accomplishing Tuhiwai Smith’s goals. Reading Native objects as primary sources allows their creators to speak, reinserting Native people into the historic record where they have always belonged. The Anishinaabe, Wabanaki, and Wampanoag indigenous communities who continue to live in the Native Northeast can also tell their own stories through material culture. When museums invite Native communities in and allow them to choose how they conserve, interpret, and display their objects and histories, the process of decolonization begins.

Indigenous Persistence after King Philip’s War: The Wampanoag Elm Burl Bowl

Their dishes, and spoons, and ladles, are made of wood, very smooth and artificial, and of a sort of wood not subject to split. These they make of several sizes.

Daniel Gookin, *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England* (1677), 151

Cotton woole and sheeps woole & basketts and Indian trayes: and 2 paire of pothookes and three smale hookes and one pott hanger.

Listing from the probate inventory of Thomas Savory (January 28, 1675)

What is the purpose of learning about different cultures, whether past or present? So that you can know what kind of houses they lived in? What kind of bowls they ate out of? What they made their clothes out of? How they raised their children? Whether they kept animals? Is that kind of knowledge and information the desired end result? NO. It most certainly isn’t. Or at least it shouldn’t be. The point of learning about other human beings is not just to collect facts and information but to use that learning to build respect and understanding.

In the mid-seventeenth century, a Wampanoag man crafted a bowl from an elm burl, drilled two holes in the handle to attach a leather strap, and began using it to prepare nassaump, or corn porridge (Figure 1.1). In 1803, Isaac Lothrop, one of the first members of the Massachusetts Historical Society (MHS) and register of probate for Plymouth County, purchased the burl bowl from Eleazer Richard for eight dollars. Over one hundred years separated the bowl from its original owner, but Richard told Lothrop the story of how his great grandfather acquired it in 1676 after he killed King Philip, the Wampanoag sachem who fought against English colonists in King Philip’s War (1675-1678). The acquisition of the burl bowl says more about nineteenth century collecting practices than indigenous history. Lathrop’s receipt, written at the time of purchase, stated that the samp bowl “was a portion of the trophy assigned to Eleazer Richard great-grandfather of the subscriber who made one of the party that terminated the existence of the once princely proprietor.” While Lathrop and Richard claimed the bowl’s proprietor was King Philip himself, the authenticity of this story is subject to critical scrutiny. In a modern-day online description of the bowl, the MHS acknowledged that Richard did not kill King Philip, but nevertheless maintained the object’s association with the Wampanoag sachem. Charles C. Willoughby, the former director of the Peabody Museum of Anthropology at Harvard, which held the bowl on loan from 1927-1982, reported in 1937 that the bowl was probably taken from from King Philip’s village, but doubted that it came specifically from his wetu. Nanepashemet, a Wampanoag historian and former director of the Wampanoag Indigenous

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23 Ibid., 163n.
Program at Plimoth Plantation, wrote that the bowl was “dubiously called ‘King Philip’s Samp Bowl’ but this is unlikely.” Despite the improbable acquisition story, the MHS has referred to the object as “King Philip’s samp bowl” as recently as March 2016, thus perpetuating the colonial myth in their public interpretation (Figure 1.2).

To propagate this myth, when the MHS received the bowl in 1803, they modified the basin by inlaying gold lettering: “A Trophy / from the Wigwam of King Philip / When he was slain in 1676 / by Richard. Presented, by Elezr / Richard, his Grandson” (Figure 1.3). Through their representation of the bowl as a war trophy, the institution subscribed to a genre of collecting Native objects through illegitimate means. The institution’s association of the burl bowl with the death of King Philip also grounded its history in the defeat and disappearance of Native people from New England. The story of “King Philip’s samp bowl” was thus another product of the “vanishing Indian” trope, a narrative that denied modernity to Native people. Institutions throughout the Northeast created the story of Native extinction through the written word and a “rich ceremonial cycle of pageants, commemorations, monument building, and lecture hall performance,” as Ojibwe ethnohistorian Jean O’Brien has argued. The MHS disseminated this narrative through their history and treatment of the burl bowl, even using it for voting with corn and beans during meetings throughout the nineteenth century. Appropriating what they deemed Native foods for their institutional use, MHS members claimed indigenous history as theirs to

interpret and reenact. As they shook corn kernels and beans in the basin of the bowl, which bore the legacy of the death of King Philip, they symbolically participated in the expulsion of Native people and culture from their narrative of history.

The institution obscures actual histories of Native people and European settlers by projecting colonial fantasies about the defeat and destruction of Native people in New England onto indigenous material culture. The online description of the burl bowl defined the end of the conflict as the moment of King Philip’s death, asserting that “inevitably, the Native Americans were no match for the well-armed colonists.”30 From the perspective of the alliance of Native nations who fought against English colonists, King Philip’s death did not mean the end of an ongoing, multifaceted indigenous resistance, encompassing an uncontainable network of indigenous leaders and families.31 The reduction of this enduring resistance movement to a rebellion that “could be contained by one year, by a single persuasive insurgent, who had taken his exit and vanished” created an impression of finality.32 Yet while the MHS continues to participate in this construction of a pivotal Native-colonial conflict, this terminal narrative does not make sense when placed in conversation with the material culture record. The persistence of Native people in the Northeast after King Philip’s War is proven in part by the presence of burl bowls and other Native-made items in probate inventories taken of households throughout the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Many of these objects survived and are currently held in the collections of institutions throughout the Northeast. The lack of makers’ marks and provenience information sometimes makes postwar indigenous material culture difficult to

32 Ibid.
identify, but its presence is undeniable. While the MHS attempted to permanently associate the burl bowl in its collections with the extinction of Native people, subsequent Native-made objects, which became visible to historians through probate inventories and surviving artifactual examples, tell another story of indigenous endurance.

“Very Smooth and Artificial”: Traditional Wampanoag Woodworking

The burl bowl at MHS was just one example of the Native-made wooden objects that English colonists remarked upon in the seventeenth century. Daniel Gookin, who moved from Virginia to Massachusetts in 1644, wrote an account of “the Indians in New England” in 1674, which is often referred to as his Historical Collections. Because he was involved in the attempted conversion of Native people to Protestant Christianity, Gookin often placed more emphasis on the adoption of English objects and cultural values than on traditional indigenous lifeways. Gookin nonetheless admired Native woodenware in his Historical Collections, remarking that “their dishes, and spoons, and ladles, are made of wood, very smooth and artificial, and of a sort of wood not subject to split.”33 The “sort of wood not subject to split” was burl, a naturally occurring rounded outgrowth on trees appreciated for its density. Gookin’s esteem for indigenous woodenware reflected the skill and craftsmanship involved in creating burl objects.

The Wampanoag man who created the burl bowl used woodworking technologies indigenous people developed over generations. Such woodworking was highly advanced, requiring both skill and environmental knowledge. John Baker observed in 1710 that “when they [Iroquois of western New York state] wou’d make Platters, or wooden Spoons, or Porringer, they drill their Wood with their stone Hatchets, and hollow it with Fire, and do after scrape it,

and polish it with a *Bever's Tooth.*” The Iroquoian technique Baker described resembled the Wampanoag’s method of crafting burl bowls. The tools they used included stone hatchets and fire for drilling, shells and stone scrapers for hollowing, and beaver teeth or moose antlers for polishing. Of these instruments, the most important tool was fire. Darius Coombs commented on this historic technology, “Fire is considered to be the number one woodworking tool of man. It’s not just used for making boats, but it’s used for making spoons, used for making bowls, mortars for grinding corn…if you had a piece of wood, and you needed to hollow it out, you burned out the inside.” Coombs’ insights into traditional material culture practices stem from his role as director of the Wampanoag Indigenous Program at Plimoth Plantation. His contemporary perspective as a Wampanoag person engaged in crafting traditional objects helps us understand seventeenth-century technologies. The use of fire demonstrated the Wampanoags’ deep relationship with the environment. The stones, shells, beaver teeth, and moose antlers with which they worked to create burl bowls were connected to complex processes of resource use.

Because burls are an outgrowth from tree trunks, Wampanoags could harvest them without cutting down an entire tree, or remove them from trees intended for other purposes, such as creating *mishoonash,* or wooden boats. Wampanoags (and other Algonquians) crafted these boats from hardwood trees, which they felled using fire. In areas around the Chesapeake, colonist Thomas Harriot described the Secotan and Pomeoioc’s “manner of making their boates” in *A briefe and true report of the Indians in Virginia,* writing, “First they choose some longe, and thicke tree, accorginge to the bignes of the boate which they would frame, and make fyre on the

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35 Darius Coombs, Brian Bartibogue, and Earl Jones, Jr., and Phillip Wynne, “Paddling through History,” PACTV, Wampanoag Indigenous Program, Plimoth Plantation, September 6, 2013, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7umxWdJRw3M&index=30&list=PLVPdkWdAvbFqqmQwGcwSRI5rYkaSjrCOE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7umxWdJRw3M&index=30&list=PLVPdkWdAvbFqqmQwGcwSRI5rYkaSjrCOE).
ground above the Roote therof, kindlinge the same by little, and little with drie mosse of trees, and chipps of woode that the flame should not mounte opp to highe, and burne to muche of the lengte of the tree. When it is almost burnt thorough, and readye to fall they make a new fyre, which they suffer to burne untill the tree fall of it own accord. This technology appeared throughout the Atlantic coast, including in Wampanoag territory. The use of contained fires to fell trees was also related to Wampanoag environmental awareness. Wampanoag men chose trees near riverbeds, from which they gathered clay to apply in a band around the log where they wanted the fire to stop and the tree to fall. They removed the bark from the area below the clay and started a controlled fire, which they monitored until the tree fell. Fire naturally tapered the end of the log, ensuring that the edges of the mishoon were smooth and even. The additional use of fire to hollow out mishoonash and bowls sealed the wood by bringing tree resin to the surface.

As Wampanoag communities passed down woodworking knowledge through generations, complex social and spiritual categories shaped crafting practices. Gookin reported that “their dishes, pots, and spoons, are the manufacture of the men,” who learned how to craft from community elders. In Wampanoag culture, the men were the “takers of life,” whereas women were the “givers of life.” When felling trees, the group of men showed respect by performing a ceremony. Coombs relayed that in the seventeenth century, “there’s ceremony,

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38 Ibid.
39 Gookin, “Historical Collections,” 151.
40 Coombs et al, “Paddling through History.”
you’re giving thanks and prayer. You’re about to take its life and you show appreciation for that gift.”

His explanation of the ceremony shows how Wampanoag spirituality influenced the creation and design of material culture. The materials they used were determined by resources available in Northeastern woodlands and coastal environments, but Wampanoag beliefs and practices also resonated in the natural world. When the Wampanoag men felled trees, the ceremonies they performed enabled life-giving processes to begin. In the coastal lands where the Wampanoag lived in the seventeenth century, trees provided subsistence and warmth through fire, and material possessions through wood. Wampanoag men built wetuash using saplings for frames and the bark of old-growth trees for roofs of winter homes. Trees were used alongside other natural materials, such as the bulrushes and cattails Wampanoag women wove to create mats to cover the frames of summer wetuash. Outside a summer settlement, women used wooden dishes created by men and clay pots they created themselves to cook meals over a fire fueled by wood. Altogether, these natural resources were interconnected with each other and with the people who gathered and depended upon them.

Wampanoags used most of the bowls and baskets they created for utilitarian purposes, such as cooking, storing provisions, and carrying goods on journeys. The burl bowl at the MHS has two holes drilled through the raised rim on one side, through which the owner likely would have strung a leather strap for carrying. Roger Williams described why Native people carried portable bowls in his 1643 Key into the Language of America, in which he wrote in the section on eating and entertainment, “I have travelled with neere 200. of them at once, neere 100. Milles through the woods, every man carrying a little Basket of [parch’d meal] at his back, and sometimes in a hollow Leather Girdle about his middle sufficient for a man three or foure daies:

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41 Ibid.
With this readie provision, and their Bow and Arrowes, are they ready for War, and travell at an houres warning. With a spoonful of this meale and a spoonful of water from the Brooke, have I made many a good dinner and supper."\(^\text{42}\) Referencing a leather girdle and a portable basket directly, Williams only alluded to toggle cups and bowls, which Wampanoag, Narragansett, and other Native people in the Northeast carried on long journeys to visit relations, meet in traditional gathering places such as fishing falls, or engage in diplomacy. Preparation for war was a limited aspect of these travels. The burl bowl was emblematic of the lifeways of coastal Algonquian people, who "had learned to exploit the seasonal diversity of their environment by practicing mobility," as environmental historian William Cronon has remarked.\(^\text{43}\) When moving inland from coastal settlements for the winter months, Wampanoags relied on the portability of household and other items. As Thomas Morton observed, “They love not to bee cumbered with many utensilles."\(^\text{44}\) The burl bowl’s moveable nature was thus an important factor in its utility. If English colonists removed the bowl now at the MHS from a wetu without permission, as Richard’s story claimed, it was not because the Wampanoag man who crafted it intended the object to respond to their appropriative desires. Rather, when he hollowed and carved the elm burl, he intended for the resulting vessel to be Wampanoag, carried by him or his relations to prepare food as they travelled on well-known trails and waterways throughout the Native Northeast.

**Empty Wetuash: English Theft of Wampanoag Material Culture and the “Vanishing Indian” Myth**

English colonists and Wampanoags developed trading networks before settler colonialism in the Northeast gained enduring presence in the early seventeenth century. In the late sixteenth century, the Wampanoag adapted objects traded with passing English fishermen and sporadic European visitors, such as the copper kettles they pounded to create sheet metal for rolled beads, projectile points, and more. The English also adapted indigenous goods, such as the beaver pelts they processed to create high quality felt for hats. The introduction of settler colonialism in the Northeast began to change these relationships from relatively equal trading partners to colonizers and colonized. Wampanoags continued to make exchanges with the English in the seventeenth century, but the nature of these trading relationships shifted as colonial policies—laws permitting livestock to roam free and graze on Native corn fields, for example—contributed to the oppression and displacement of indigenous people.\(^\text{45}\)

The English also began to collect Native objects, through illegal means as well as through trade, as they enforced colonial policies and encroached on Native lands. It is not a coincidence that two of the most common seventeenth-century Native objects found in modern museum collections—woodenware and twined baskets—are the very items early colonial writers like Gookin appreciated. Admiration for burl bowls led to English demand. Wooden bowls were practical items to possess because settlers could use them to prepare food. Wampanoags did begin to craft burl bowls for sale to English settlers in the seventeenth century, but many bowls were not intended for trade. The Wampanoag man who created the burl bowl at the MHS likely intended it for his or his relations’ use. If an English colonist stole the traditional Wampanoag item from a wetu, the burl bowl reflected another mode of acquisition of Native objects: theft.

When the English colonizers known as the Pilgrims arrived on the coast of modern-day Cape Cod in November 1620, they first encountered the Wampanoag through their material culture. As they explored Wampanoag homelands, they found physical signs of indigenous presence, including graves and wetuash. They stole multiple objects from these sites, events that William Bradford, the governor of Plymouth Colony, related in his journal, *A Relation or Journal of the Beginning and Proceedings of the English Plantation Settled at Plimoth in New England.* In the *Relation*, Bradford and Winslow described their encounters with Wampanoag material culture in detail. Ethnohistorian Russell Handsman has recently analyzed the *Mayflower* party’s experience of Wampanoag material culture, writing that “they could not have comprehended…the web-like connections amongst these still-used artifacts and special social relations of production (age, gender, and clan relations), long-practiced traditions of resource use, ecological histories, and archives of Indigenous knowledge or cultural wisdom.” Moving through a landscape rich in meaning, the English settlers were in unfamiliar territory. English settlers did not fully comprehend the meanings of the objects they found, observed, and stole, but the writers of the *Relation* relayed how they interacted with indigenous material culture in detail.

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46 Henry Martyn Dexter, *Mourt’s Relation or Journal of the Plantation at Plymouth* (Boston: John Kimball Wiggan, 1865). George Morton compiled Bradford’s journal with Edward Winslow’s account of the first several years of Plymouth colony, which was first published in London in 1622 by John Bellamy. This account is often cited as *Mourt’s Relation* due to the erroneous attribution of the text to George Morton, known as Mourt, but the true title is *A Relation or Journal of the Beginning and Proceedings of the English Plantation Settled at Plimoth in New England*. This chapter references a later edition, published in 1865 and with an introduction by Henry Martyn Dexter. This version of the text may differ from the original due to Dexter’s editorial choices.

In one example, two “Saylers, which were newly come on the shore, by chance espied two houses, which had beene lately dwelt in, but the people were gone.”\textsuperscript{48} They listened for the Native occupants, but “hearing no body entred the houses,” then “took out some things” and left.\textsuperscript{49} They returned with seven or eight men, including the Bradford, who described the objects inside the \textit{wetu}. These included “wooden Boules, Trayes & Dishes, Earthen Pots, Hand baskets made of Crab shells, wrought together” and “Baskets of sundry sorts, bigger and some lesser, finer and some courser: some were curiously wrought with blacke and white in pretie works.”\textsuperscript{50} As they left, the author noted that “some of the best things we took away with us.”\textsuperscript{51} It is possible that some of the “wooden Boules, Trayes & Dishes” and “Baskets of sundry sorts” were among the items they stole. And this was not an isolated incident. The English took items without permission from graves, \textit{wetuash}, and people throughout the seventeenth century.

The story of the burl bowl presented by the MHS was thus an extension of the practices of these English settlers in 1620. Richard claimed his great-grandfather removed the bowl from the \textit{wetu} of King Philip, much as the seven or eight English colonists did from the \textit{wetuash} they came across fifty years earlier. Regardless of the veracity of Richard’s story, his tale indicated that nineteenth-century institutions shared many of the attitudes that drove the English settlers to steal Wampanoag objects. When the English took “the best things” from these \textit{wetuash}, they removed them from their cultural contexts, erasing their Wampanoag creators from colonial narratives. The writers of the \textit{Relation} were careful to note that the \textit{wetuash} these settlers entered were empty. While Wampanoag communities did suffer from epidemics that dramatically

\textsuperscript{48} Dexter, \textit{Mourt’s Relation or Journal of the Plantation at Plymouth}, 34.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 34.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 35.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 36.
reduced their populations before the English colonists arrived in 1620, many survived. Disease was a serious consequence of colonization for Wampanoag communities, but it was not the only cause of lives lost—English violence also played a significant role.\textsuperscript{52} Disease also did not decimate populations. The \textit{wetu} was empty, but arguably not abandoned. The inhabitants may have moved inland for the winter. King Philip’s \textit{wetu} was also empty after his death in 1676—although the story presented by the MHS failed to account for his wife and son, who remained alive albeit kidnapped and sold into slavery by the English. The acquisition of the burl bowl paved the way for the MHS to recast the object’s history without Native input. Both Bradford and Richard’s emphasis on the empty \textit{wetuash} contributed to the “vanishing Indian” myth. The MHS’s story of the burl bowl not only celebrated the theft of Native objects, but presented the collection of these items as the rightful action to take after the destruction and disappearance of Native communities and cultures. Yet this narrative was inaccurate in 1620, 1676, and 1803, and it continues to be untrue today.

\textbf{Indian Trays, Shoes, and Bowls: Indigenous Persistence in New England from 1676-1756}

After the devastations of King Philip’s War, Native people survived and continued to interact and trade with English colonists. The story of Native people throughout the Northeast is one of endurance, but the years between King Philip’s War and the revitalization of Native communities in the twentieth century constituted a difficult time for indigenous people. In the introduction to the edited collection \textit{After King Philip’s War}, historian Colin Calloway

\\[\text{\textsuperscript{52}}\text{David Jones, “Virgin Soils Revisited,” in Peter Mancall and James Merrell, eds., American Encounters: Natives and Newcomers from European Contact to Indian Removal, 1500-1850 (Routledge, 2007), 710.}\]
enumerated the struggles Native people faced throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Confined onto tiny reservations and subjected to increasing state regulation, Native communities in Massachusetts lost land as guardians, appointed by the state ostensibly to protect Native lands and resources, sold tribal acreage to white buyers in a blatant abuse of this system. Many Native people involuntarily worked as indentured servants in white households to pay off debts. Others migrated north, joining Abenaki communities on both sides of an emerging American-Canadian border. Some Native men joined the whaling industry and went away to sea to support their families. Small communities of Native people remained in their traditional homelands, maintained their allegiances to networks of relations, and preserved their cultural traditions, but at a high cost. They were now compelled by poverty to move throughout their traditional homelands in the search for wage labor or displaced family members, rather than hunting, fishing, or gathering with relations. One way Native people made money was by peddling their crafts to their English neighbors, especially baskets, brooms, and burl bowls. Gookin’s admiration for Native-made woodenware presaged the widespread demand for burl bowls, which colonists often called “knot” bowls, in the late-seventeenth century and early eighteenth centuries.

Studying oral traditions and reexamining historic documents provides new perspectives about indigenous persistence in New England throughout eighteenth century. During the eighty years after King Philip’s War, Native people also appeared by way of their material culture. The presence of Native material culture in probate inventories and other sources from 1676 through

54 Ibid., 6.
55 O’Brien, Firsting and Lasting, 180.
1756 provides evidence of indigenous persistence in Massachusetts. It is especially important to study indigenous persistence through material culture because institutions such as the MHS have used these objects to construct the “vanishing Indian” myth and deny modernity to indigenous people. The study of indigenous resistance through material culture is necessary to decolonize the story of the burl bowl at the MHS. In fact—to add another complexity to the story—it is possible that the bowl at the MHS was not originally crafted in the mid-seventeenth century, but instead came from the period immediately following the war. Without definitive provenience information, historians cannot confirm the exact date of creation. Regardless of this uncertainty, the burl bowl at the MHS speaks to the necessity of revisiting the story of Native people in Massachusetts after 1676.

Before they traded burl bowls with the English, the Wampanoag traded them amongst themselves. “They have dainty wooden bowles of maple, of highe price amongst them,” Thomas Morton observed, “and these are dispersed by bartering one with the other, and are but in certaine parts of the Country made, where the severall trades are appropriated to the inhabitants of those parts onely.” The exchange of burl bowls was one element of a complex economy based on reciprocity. Wampanoag people traveled in mishoonash to trade objects with their relations. These boats were traditionally representative of diplomacy because they carried people to extended kinship networks located at various points along the coast and on the islands. As the Wampanoag adapted to English presence, they also began manufacturing burl bowls, twined baskets, and other objects for exchange with settlers. These objects became representative of early diplomatic relations with the English. These relationships changed after King Philip’s War when poverty and debt introduced and enforced by English presence required Native people to

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56 Morton, *New English Canaan*, 159.
participate in wage labor, work as indentured servants, and sell or exchange their material culture to make a living in lieu of access to traditional subsistence practices.

Probate inventories—written listings taken at the time of a person’s death to calculate the value of their estate—provide evidence of English demand for Native woodworking before the war. These inventories arose from English colonial context, which valued individual and nuclear family property, rather than from indigenous contexts. Nevertheless, the appraisers who listed household items unknowingly recorded Native presence in these colonial documents. Two probate inventories from 1673, associated with the estates of Roger Annadowne and Thomas Prence, include “Indian trays” alongside other “wooden wares.”\(^{57}\) Prence and Annadowne presumably obtained these “Indian trays” through trade with Native people, perhaps because their woodworking technology produced higher-quality items than English hewn bowls. Savory’s inventory from 1675 listed “baskettts and Indian trayes” in the same line, which may have meant the baskets as well as the trays were Native-made.\(^ {58}\) The existence of these items in colonial households provides evidence of cross-cultural exchanges in the years leading up to King Philip’s War.

In reading these records, silences are equally important for historians to consider. For example, the 1669 inventory of Alice Carpenter Southworth Bradford lists “a wicker baskett; galley pots & glasses & such smale thinges of Little value” in one line, indicating baskets may not have been worth enough to warrant their own row. The same inventory also lists “two bowls


4 smale wooden Dishes’’ together, which may have been English or Native-made. The limited attribution of the word ‘‘Indian’’ to indigenous objects, along with the lesser value accorded to indigenous items, indicates that English settlers owned more indigenous objects than the inventories show at first reading. Referring to Native ‘‘dishes, and spoons, and ladles,’’ as well as other items such as baskets, Gookin asserted in 1674 that ‘‘their household stuff is but little and mean.’’ Colonial appraisers may have shared these sentiments, neglecting to record woodenware, brooms, or baskets, particularly if they were Native-made.

Because appraisers took probate inventories after the property owner’s death, records from the late-seventeenth century may represent items acquired before the start of King Philip’s War. For example, the inventory of the household of Peter Hunt, Jr., who died in 1676 or 1677, listed ‘‘1 little Indian Box.’’ The presence of the box in his household speaks to the trading relationship indigenous people developed with English colonists before 1675. After the war, Native people built upon these relationships as they continued to adapt their material culture for English use, despite receiving unfair prices for their goods. Native people were able to negotiate with colonists due to years of trade, which helped them survive despite economic and cultural oppression. We see the outcome of these negotiations in the material culture record. Bowls that the Wampanoag crafted for trade contained different design elements than those they made for internal community use. For instance, a maple burl bowl currently in the collections of Pilgrim Hall Museum, located in Plymouth, Massachusetts, is not a toggle bowl with a handle for

60 Gookin, Historical Collections, 151.
carrying, but a round serving bowl, similar to the hewn bowls the English were accustomed to. The bowl is tentatively attributed to the Wampanoag, and dates to the mid-seventeenth to early eighteenth century. The style of the bowl reflected English desires for smooth edges, symmetry, and simplicity, indicating that the Native creator probably intended to trade the bowl with colonists. The “little Indian box” in Hunt’s household is not traceable to an extant object, but an indigenous craftsperson likely also crafted it for the purpose of trade, adapting traditional material culture for sale in a non-Native market.

The probate inventories taken in the 1680s may have contained wooden items English colonists acquired in the 1670s. On May 20, 1685, the household items of Epharim Tincome, Sr. included “2 wooden boles & Trayes & other dishes.” If these wooden dishes were Native, Tincome may have acquired them during King Philip’s War. Many Native communities allied themselves with the English during the conflict, notably “Praying Indians.” Praying Indians elected to live in praying towns, which were communities established by New England Puritans in their attempts to convert Native people to Christianity. These communities of Christian-affiliated Natives continued to interact economically with the English, who discriminated against them during wartime. To take one example from August 1675 after a raid on Lancaster, Massachusetts, led by a party of Nipmucs allied with King Philip, colonial forces arrested James Printer, a Nipmuc scholar and Christian convert, and falsely accused him of participating in the attack. Printer, who was at church during the raid, was imprisoned for a month in a Boston jail.

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and “barely escaped lynching” by an English mob. Printer eventually proved his innocence, but many other innocent Native people were falsely accused of treason and imprisoned—or worse, sold into slavery within New England and the Atlantic World. The continued existence of trade between Native people and English colonists during the war sheds new light on these communities.

Another incident from September 1676 illustrates the existence of trade relationships between colonists and Native allies—and English betrayal. In early September, Richard Waldron, a captain of the English army who ran a trading post in Cocheco (present-day Dover, New Hampshire), took 350 Native people captive at his trading post, of which 250 were women and children. Keeping ten to serve as scouts in the army, he sent the rest of these captives by ship to Boston. In a letter to the Boston authorities, Waldron admitted “the Indians being now on board & Comeing towards you Wee that have been Soe far improv’d about them thought it Convenient to Inform how ffar they have kept the Pease made with us.” This peace was hardly considered. The English sold approximately 200 of these Native captives into slavery. At least half of the 350 Native captives had gathered in Cocheco to trade peacefully with the English at Waldron’s trading post. They included Native people from praying towns such as Wamesit as well as Pennacooks, who were allied with the English. Native groups brought items they crafted to exchange with English colonists at Waldron’s trading post. These items did not leave a paper

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65 Lisa Brooks, “Turning the Looking Glass on King Philip’s War,” 718.
68 Norton, In the Devil’s Snare, 90.
trail accessible to historians, but we know that they existed. Tincome’s household was one of many in Massachusetts that contained wooden objects potentially created by Native people.

In the aftermath of the war, surviving Native communities continued to face economic oppression, which led to another form of captivity: indentured servitude. Probate inventories from the 1680s also listed multiple Native servants, exposing how poverty and accumulated debt affected indigenous communities. The 1684 or 1685 inventory of John Bourne listed “to about 4 years time in an Indian servant” in his household.69 Bourne lived in Marshfield, Massachusetts, just north of Plymouth and a central part of Wampanoag homelands. The Native person working as an indentured servant perhaps came from one of the surrounding praying towns, such as Assawomit or Namassekett (Figure 1.4). After placing the praying towns under supervision during King Philip’s War, the English forcibly disbanded many of them in the late 1670s, compelling Christian Indians to find work and community elsewhere. If a former Native inhabitant of a praying town accumulated debt from Bourne between 1676 and 1680, Bourne may have forced him into indentured servitude. In such a case, the production of Native goods such as burl bowls and the impoverished conditions of indigenous people after King Philip’s War would have been deeply intertwined. Bourne’s Native servant may have produced the “Wooden dishes” listed several lines above his name in the same inventory during his indenture.70 Other Native people traveled throughout their homelands, peddling goods to pay off their debts in order to avoid forced servitude in English households. These entangled histories require creative reading and interpretation by scholars, who have conventionally overlooked possibilities and instances of cross-cultural exchange in their uses of probate inventories. When examined with an

eye to Native presence, inventories provide evidence of Native-colonial interaction and indigenous persistence through material culture.

Native people continued to produce burl items for sale well into the eighteenth century. During this period, however, English colonists also began manufacturing items from burl themselves. Probate records from the mid-eighteenth century included numerous examples of “knot” bowls, not all of which were Native-created. The 1746 inventory of John Hinsdell of Deerfield, Massachusetts listed “Six Knot Dishes” and “two root Dishes.” These “knot” and “root” dishes were perhaps Native-made or Native-inspired. European colonists had prior woodworking traditions, but their arrival in a new environment required significant adaptations to their use of wood, including learning from indigenous practitioners. English colonists learned to how to work with burl from Native communities through a process of acculturation. At the same time, Native people continued to trade bowls and other items with settlers. Another 1746 inventory from Deerfield, David Wright’s, included one “knot dish” and “pr of Indian Shoes.” Wright transacted with a Native person directly or indirectly to acquire the pair of shoes, which were perhaps moccasinash or snowshoes. Two additional inventories from Deerfield also listed “Indian shoes”—John Hinsdale’s and Isaac Williams’—but these records were from 1788 and 1807, respectively. Wright appears to have been one of the first inhabitants of Deerfield to

72 Devere A. Card, The Use of Burl in America (Utica NY: Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, 1971), 5.
obtain “Indian shoes,” a newer item that Native people began to peddle to the English in the mid-eighteenth century. The Native person who traded these shoes with him was possibly the creator of the knot bowl as well. The Native items in Wright’s inventory strongly suggest that indigenous people in Massachusetts continued to adapt their material culture and trade with English colonists for multiple decades after 1676.

Indeed, the story of Chickens Warrups, the Native of an amalgamated Pequannock and Paugussett community originally located in Lonetown, Connecticut, proves that indigenous people created objects and sold them to English colonists in the mid-eighteenth century. In 1748, Warrups moved his community from Lonetree, Connecticut to lands next to the Schaghticoke Reservation in New York in response to colonial encroachment.75 Afterwards, he continued to travel through his homelands, exchanging Native crafts—including baskets, brooms, and wooden bowls—with local shopkeepers in Danbury, Connecticut to purchase food items and material staples. An account book from April 1756 shows that Warrups paid for items with three “half finished baskits,” three finished “baskits,” and several days of labor, which he spent hoeing, planting, dressing flax, and more.76 Warrups’ exchange of both crafts and labor for necessities indicated the nature of the work Native people did to pay their debts and feed and clothe their families. Chickens and his relations survived through continuing Native crafting practices. They sewed baskets, burned and scraped wooden bowls, and built snowshoes, which they offered into the colonial economy in order to persist as Native people through interconnected and complex

social relationships. Colonial sources such as probate inventories and account books provide windows into these indigenous histories.

“To Build Respect and Understanding”: Decolonizing the Burl Bowl

The layers of exchange and interaction between Native people and English colonists in the eighty years following King Philip’s War directly refute the MHS’s argument that King Philip’s War resulted in “the almost complete extermination of Native Americans in New England.” While the MHS asserted that “many who survived either fled to tribes in the West or were transported as slaves to the West Indies,” leaving New England void of Native people, it is clear even from a limited sample of Massachusetts probate inventories that this version of history is inaccurate. When understood in the context of seventeenth-century indigenous history and material culture, the burl bowl in the collections of the MHS represents indigenous persistence and survival rather than erasure. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the MHS participated in the perpetuation of the “vanishing Indian” myth by denying Wampanoag communities’ existence, and also excluding them from participating in the interpretation or use of the burl bowl. While today the bowl is not eligible for repatriation to modern Wampanoag tribal communities under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), it is important for the MHS to rethink its historical practices and make this item more accessible to indigenous people.

The institution’s treatment of the burl bowl throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries challenges the authority claimed by the MHS to conserve and interpret indigenous

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79 Ibid.
material culture. In addition to the unsettling history of the object’s use in society meetings, as well as the words inscribed permanently into the basin, the MHS has engaged in other destructive practices. A 1982 condition report stated that the bowl had multiple “gaps and cracks” that had been “crudely filled with something resembling plastic wood” (Figure 1.5). These so-called conservation techniques—which followed the institution’s initial decision to inscribe and use the object for colonial means—reveal contradictions in the ways Western museums have constructed the necessity for objects to remain in collections, rather than with the communities that created them. Conservator Dean Sully argued in *Decolonizing Conservation: Caring for Maori Meeting Houses Outside New Zealand* that this approach has traditionally been justified by the “preservation of the physical fabric of objects to preserve the information said to be contained in the object, in the hope that this information can be extracted through scientific research at some stage in the future.” He criticized this view that “sees the object as a container of knowledge that requires expert revelation to reveal its value.” Rather than revealing the burl bowl’s history, the MHS has obscured it through the promotion of colonial mythology under the guise of academic research. Linda Coombs, an Aquinnah Wampanoag museum educator who has also directed the Wampanoag Indigenous Program at Plimoth Plantation, challenged this notion when she inquired into the purpose of studying different cultures. She asserted, “The point of learning about other human beings is not just to collect facts and information but to use that learning to build respect and understanding.”

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81 Dean Sully, *Decolonizing Conservation: Caring for Maori meeting houses outside New Zealand* (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2007), 33.
nature of the MHS’s multi-century interpretation of the burl bowl, which is disrespectful to modern indigenous people. A decolonized practice, by contrast, would make the object accessible to modern Wampanoag communities to study and interpret, recognizing that indigenous people, rather than the MHS alone, have authority to define and control their material culture heritage. While the society has enabled current generations of Wampanoag people to gain temporary access to the bowl by loaning it to other institutions, including Plimoth Plantation, the institution continues to retain the object in storage, where Wampanoag people have limited interactions with it or even awareness of it.

The inclusion of the Wampanoag elm burl bowl in *Thanksgiving: Memory, Myth & Meaning*, an exhibit at Plimoth Plantation that ran from 2002-2008, was a step towards a decolonized museum practice. Plimoth Plantation, a living history museum in Plymouth, Massachusetts, hosts the Wampanoag Indigenous Program, a Native-run educational site staffed by indigenous interpreters. Coombs, who was the director of the Wampanoag Indigenous Program when the exhibit ran, explained why the *Thanksgiving* exhibit showed respect for Native people. She wrote, “At the very first thought of the exhibit, the Wampanoag were included. From start to finish we were active partners in the planning, development, and execution of the project. In this case, it was not just the Wampanoag Indian Program staff involved, but the whole community.”83 The indigenous curators of the exhibit chose to display the burl bowl as a traditional Wampanoag item, alongside an earthenware cooking pot dating to approximately 1600 C.E. and a reproduction maple burl toggle cup. In this context, the elm burl bowl constituted one element of Wampanoag history, which helped illustrate the complexity of Native culture. Using the burl bowl as an example of indigenous woodworking technology

83 Ibid., 475.
enabled the exhibit to tell a story of Wampanoag presence and resilience in the seventeenth century.

The burl bowl’s label in the Thanksgiving exhibit did not mention the gold-lettered inscription in the basin of the object because the Wampanoag curators intended to teach visitors about Native history, rather than center colonial narratives. Coombs elaborated, “We’re still here. And our history is carried through the centuries to the present day. Typically the telling of that story has ended with the arrival of the Pilgrims or after King Philip’s War. This omission has served to erase us from history. Since the Wampanoag were not in actuality erased, we would simply add that which has been omitted—creating a more truthful, more accurate, and fuller view of history.” By choosing not to represent the bowl’s colonial modification, the exhibit proclaimed the bowl’s Wampanoag history as its defining characteristic. Thanksgiving: Memory, Myth & Meaning thus used the burl bowl to tell the story of Wampanoag presence in New England after Thanksgiving without calling attention to the omission of Native people from the region. Refusing to acknowledge these colonial ideologies helped ensure that museum-goers would carry new meanings associated with Wampanoag history and survival with them after exploring the Thanksgiving exhibit, which was one step towards Coombs’ goal of “creating a more truthful, more accurate, and fuller view of history.” Yet despite the detailed revision of the bowl’s history and enduring meanings for the Thanksgiving exhibit, the MHS has not updated their official version of the object’s history and significance.

Coombs’ advocacy for Plimoth Plantation’s active partnership with Wampanoag people throughout the process of creating the Thanksgiving exhibit illustrated the importance of deep

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84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
collaboration with indigenous people as a vital step in the process of decolonization. The MHS has an opportunity to not only reconsider how they depict the burl bowl in their public records, but also to invite modern indigenous community members to help write a revised version of the object’s history. In my view, it is the responsibility of colonial institutions who still hold the keys to indigenous collections to ensure that Native people help control the creation and dissemination of knowledge about their material past. This step includes relinquishing power over objects and conventional Western notions of “ownership.” When Wampanoag people can have a say in the conservation, representation, and use of the burl bowl beyond choosing how to display it in a single exhibit, the process of decolonizing the object can truly begin.
Image Appendix

Figure 1.1

MHS Madness was an online competition in March 2016 which pitted different MHS items against each other. The game included the Wampanoag burl bowl, here listed as “King Philip’s samp bowl,” which lost to an item called “Salem witch trials,” a diary entry from Samuel Sewall describing events from 1692. The society continues to promote a colonial interpretation of the bowl and use it for their own disrespectful purposes, such as this competition, without Wampanoag input.

The basin of the Wampanoag burl bowl, inlaid in gold lettering: “A Trophy / from the Wigwam of King Philip / When he was slain in 1676 / by Richard. Presented, by Elezer / Richard, his Grandson.” We can also see damage to the bowl; there is a notch to the left, lost wood in the center, and a large crack to the right.

Image by author. Courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society.
Figure 1.5

The bottom of the Wampanoag elm burl bowl, showing the object’s accession number in pink and a large patch of sticky residue. The cracks have been filled in with plastic wood, and insects have bored holes in several places.

Image by author. Courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society.
Cultural Transformation through Souvenirs: 
The Anishinaabe Miniature *Mokuk*

In the spring of each year each family of Indians contributed one large mocok* of sugar which weighed from eighty to one hundred pounds, which Priest Dejan would empty into barrels, and then go down to Detroit with it to buy dry goods, returning with cloth with which to clothe his Indian children.

Odawa historian Andrew J. Blackbird’s *History of the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians* (1887), 48

The Indians are pouring in from all directions – supposed to be about 1600 in all, now on the island….It is impossible to give an adequate idea of their wretchedness. ---- I have frequently counted fifty wigwams upon the shore nearby.

Amanda White-Ferry, a missionary in Michilimackinac, Michigan to her sister, Hannah White, a student at Buckland Winter School for Girls in Ashfield, MA, June 29, 1824

Some of the tribes also bring in for sale several articles of Indian manufacture, particularly a kind of rush mat of a very handsome fabric, bark baskets filled with maple sugar, called mokeocks*, with quilled mockasins, shot pouches, and other fancy goods of Indian fabric, which are generally in demand as articles of curiosity.

Henry Schoolcraft’s *Narrative Journal of Travels Through the Northwestern Regions of the United States* (1821), 90

I was much pleased, my dear Mary, to learn from your letter, that a missionary spirit reigned in your school, & really happy that you took an interest in it…

Mary E. Stuart, a missionary in Michilimackinac, Michigan to Mary Lyon, the principal of Buckland Winter School for Girls, November 18, 1829

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*Mokoaks* are Anishinaabe birchbark boxes.
Andrew J. Blackbird published a comprehensive *History of the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians of Michigan* in 1887. An Odawa from the Little Traverse Bay Band, Blackbird sought to “present the history of the last race of Indians now existing in the State of Michigan, called the Ottawa and Chippewa Nations of Indians.” In his preface, Blackbird outlined his goal to “record the earliest history of the Ottawa tribe of Indians in particular, according to their traditions.” The act of publishing a history of the Anishinaabe in the late nineteenth century was no small feat. Blackbird’s world was profoundly impacted by the United States government’s policies of land loss, removal, and assimilation, which evolved throughout the nineteenth century as Americans expanded westward and advocated for the extermination of Native cultural identities, lives, and lands. In this context, the very existence of Blackbird’s *History* had revolutionary potential. For a Native person to publish a history of his own tribe, white officials had to ensure it did not contain ideas that were anti-Christian or anti-white. Before his preface, nine supporters, including government officials, a public school principal, and a pastor assured readers he was “a friend of the white people” and “loyal to the Government” and thus “[recommended] this work of Mr A J Blackbird as interesting and reliable.” Blackbird asserted that his legitimacy did not stem from these white officials, but instead from his deep understanding of Anishinaabe traditions from personal and family history.

Despite writing that “in a few more generations they will be so intermingled with the Caucasian race as to be hardly distinguished as descended from the Indian nations, and their

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87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
language will be lost,” Blackbird also resisted the notion that Odawa people were disappearing. While he reproduced the argument for Native extinction, Blackbird’s detailed account resisted this terminal narrative by affirming Anishinaabe presence in Michigan from the “earliest history” through the present and preserving the language for future generations in the afterword. Furthermore, he predicted the possibility of “many well-educated Indians in this state,” and “consequently happiness, blessings and prosperity” if the government allotted funds to the Anishinaabe people. In his account, the Odawa and Ojibwe were the “last race of Indians” in Michigan because they survived colonialism. He carefully and deliberately wove Odawa and Ojibwe people back into the history of the Great Lakes region, detailing specific people, places, and events with Indians as the main players. The volume’s existence and contents spoke to Anishinaabe persistence throughout the nineteenth century.

Blackbird’s *History* constituted one of many acts of indigenous resistance in this era. As Anishinaabe groups faced destructive government policies and the steady increase of non-Native settlers, which threatened both their sovereignty and traditional land bases, they fought back. While Blackbird chose writing as his medium, many other indigenous people persevered by crafting objects, such as the *mokuks*, or birchbark containers, that both Blackbird and Henry Schoolcraft observed. Because Blackbird used a published volume to present his community’s history, his book seems more accessible to historians. Yet the objects created throughout the nineteenth century by Anishinaabe families, who did not have the means or status to publish their own works, also reflected their beliefs, desires, and histories. When used as sources, these objects widen the field of indigenous history. As Anishinaabe families exchanged large

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89 Ibid., 24.
90 Ibid., 99.
“mocoks” full of maple sugar for dry goods and clothing, they wielded traditional crafting and subsistence practices to resist assimilation and survive economically. Likewise, when these families brought miniature “mokeocks” to Michilimackinac, where they sold them to missionaries, traders, and visitors, they ensured they would be able to persist in their homelands by adapting their material culture to the souvenir market. The birchbark containers reveal how Anishinaabe communities understood and lived in their world. The elements of each mokuk, from the birchbark that constitutes their form to the spruce roots that hold them together to the quillwork and etchings that illustrate their purpose, tell their own story. Studying how Anishinaabe artists created and exchanged mokuks places indigenous voices at the center of the history of the Great Lakes region.

The collections of the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum contain two Anishinaabe birchbark objects, a canoe and a mokuk, which the Female Seminary collected in the nineteenth century through missionaries. Both are birchbark miniatures with porcupine quill designs. Of the two, only the canoe is listed in a catalogue of articles sent by missionaries to Mount Holyoke Female Seminary before 1892, but its strong resemblance to the mokuk suggests an alumna donated the two items at the same time (Figures 2.1 and 2.2). As souvenir objects collected by missionaries, the Anishinaabe miniatures also shed light on Mount Holyoke’s institutional history and presence in the Great Lakes region. Two associates of Mary Lyon, the founder of Mount Holyoke, served as missionaries on Michilimackinac Island in the early nineteenth century: Mary Stuart and Amanda White-Ferry. During this time, Lyon exchanged multiple letters with both missionaries, and taught Hannah White, Amanda’s sister, at the Buckland

Winter School for Girls. Michilimackinac was a hub for Anishinaabe souvenirs in the 1820s and 30s, when these two missionary families lived on the island. Based on archival evidence, we can surmise that a member of the Stuart or White-Ferry family purchased the *mokuk*, but the provenience information is inconclusive. Despite missing information about its origins, the *mokuk* symbolizes the complex landscape of indigenous history in Michigan. Missionary presence, the growing influx of visitors engaged in scenic tourism, and government-sponsored land loss and removal in the Great Lakes region contributed to economic and cultural disfranchisement. Anishinaabe artists experienced the negative results of these processes of colonialism, and weighed economic and cultural reasons in their decision to create souvenir *mukus*.

When White-Ferry observed more than a thousand Anishinaabe people pouring into Michilimackinac, she did not regard a dying race. Similarly, in his *History*, Blackbird used a first-person perspective as an Odawa to bear witness to indigenous survivance. Survivance, a term that Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vinzenor has developed, is “more than survival, more than endurance or mere response; the stories of survivance are an active presence....The native stories of survivance are successive and natural estates; survivance is an active repudiation of dominance, tragedy, and victimry.”

We also see this active presence in such souvenirs as miniature *mukus*, which Anishinaabe people created to affirm their place within the increasing population of missionaries, tourists, and government officials in their homelands. The adaptation

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of birchbark containers for the souvenir market was not a mere response to these forces and events, but a deliberate negotiation of colonial presence.

At first glance, the mokuk appears to be full of contradictions. Whereas an Anishinaabe artist adapted and marketed the miniature mokuk to Victorian Americans, a missionary collected the item as an example of Indian-ness and gave it to the Mount Holyoke Female Seminary to represent the culture of the peoples she hoped to civilize. Underneath the contradictions, the mokuk makes sense as an item profoundly influenced by two cultures. The mokuk witnessed both the missionary presence on Michilimackinac and Anishinaabe resilience in a changing environment. Amidst Americans’ convictions to civilize and convert the “savages,” a goal clearly articulated in the letters and pamphlets by missionaries circulating in the early nineteenth century, an Anishinaabe artist folded, sewed, and quilled a miniature birchbark basket, filled it with maple sugar, and sold it to a Christian buyer. The mokuk is a key to understanding the relationship between these two peoples, whose lives intersected amidst opposition. When read as a historic source alongside other objects and pieces of writing from the nineteenth century, the miniature mokuk in Mount Holyoke’s missionary collection exposes Anishinaabe agency within the context of colonialism in Michigan.

**Mokuks as Souvenirs**

Traditional mokuks are birchbark containers, folded and sewn with high, inward slanting sides. They appeared throughout the Native Northeast and came in a variety of shapes and sizes. Anishinaabe artists decorated mokuks by etching geometric designs on the sides of containers with scrapers. They garnished the rims with porcupine quills or spruce roots, which

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they interwove to form checkerboard patterns, or wrapped at spaced intervals to showcase the cedar rim. The Wisconsin Ojibwe artist who created the *mokuk* shown in Figure 2.3 composed a geometric pattern, which she created by scraping away the outer layers of winter bark to reveal the lighter layer. When she designed the *mokuk*, she considered whether the basket would be utilitarian (used for cooking or storage), decorative (brought out for special occasions or displayed), or sacred (used for ceremonial purposes.) Because the basket was utilitarian, she wrapped spruce roots or sweet grass around the cedar rim instead of decorating it with quills. When Anishinaabe artists intended their birchbark containers for cooking or other functional tasks, they often eschewed quills for spruce roots because they were less delicate.

When they miniaturized *mokuks* for the souvenir market, Anishinaabe artists adapted these quillwork traditions, incorporating decorative patterns on the sides of the baskets. They applied quills in new shapes, often characterized as floral motifs or curvilinear designs. In contrast to the geometric patterns, floral or curvilinear quillwork had curves instead of edges. These new designs also sometimes represented specific images or scenes, such as the Anishinaabe miniature *mokuk* collected in approximately 1820 that depicted two canoes with figures wearing headdresses on one side and an encampment scene on the other. Victorian Americans, who comprised the majority of indigenous artists’ market, desired ornately decorated objects. They were also interested in traditional Native life, depicted in pictorial scenes. These demands drove the styles indigenous artists produced on souvenirs, which were a new category of object. Anishinaabe artists created objects tailored to the Victorian aesthetic, but they also continued to produce traditional large *mokuks*, which they decorated according to their respective

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94 Ibid. While it was not always women who created souvenir items, Anishinaabe basketry was a traditionally female practice.
95 Ibid., 146.
purposes. Furthermore, while artists incorporated Europeans’ demands for floral patterns and realistic depictions of indigenous life into their designs on souvenir objects, they “mediated [them] through preexisting color preferences, formal sensibilities, and concepts of spatial composition.” The resulting souvenir items evoked the traditional quilled or etched geometric designs on utilitarian, decorative, and sacred Anishinaabe birchbark containers. They adapted these patterns to appeal to non-Native audiences, but they rooted their decisions in an established tradition of birchbark basketry.

The items produced by Anishinaabe artists for sale to non-Native people were a unique category of object. As art historian Ruth B. Phillips has argued in Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900, the production of souvenirs constituted a new genre of art, influenced by both indigenous tradition and Victorian American demands. Phillips has advocated for a specific kind of hybridity called “dual signification,” writing, “My data supports the thesis that choices were neither entirely dictated by the dominant culture nor were they blind and unmotivated. Rather, I will argue, Aboriginal artists routinely elected to use images and forms that, while innovative, continued to “make sense” within both indigenous and Euro-North American signifying systems.” The mokuk held by Mount Holyoke illustrates this concept; while the miniaturization and addition of floral quill work to the traditional maple sugaring basket responded to the desires of the Victorian consumers, traditional indigenous practices dictated the basket’s form, materials, and process of creation. The decision to add quillwork to the mokuk responded to the aesthetic demands of a

96 Ibid., 172.
97 Ibid., 20. My study of the miniature mokuk draws from Phillips’ work, which explores the role of souvenirs as indigenous art. I depart from her analysis by placing her ideas in conversation with specific ethnohistorical contexts, bringing in indigenous voices such as Blackbird’s and missionary presence such as the Ferry-White family.
Euro-American audience, but the process of quilling baskets made for both personal use and trade within communities was not new.

Thomas McKenny, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs who wrote an account of his visit to Michilimackinac in 1827, observed that larger mokuks, which Anishinaabe groups sold to traders who purchased goods in bulk, “are not ornamented, and contain from ten to thirty pounds of sugar.”98 The mokuks Odawa families filled with maple sugar and gave to Priest Dejan in exchange for clothing were the successors of these objects. Miniature mokuks for sale as souvenir goods first appeared in nineteenth century. Comparatively, these miniatures were “little receptacle of a basket form, and oval, though without a handle, made of birchbark, with a top sewn of wattap (the fine roots of the cedar, split),….ornamented with porcupine’s quills, died [sic] red, yellow, and green” and held “from two to a dozen table spoons full of sugar.”99 They were “made for presents or for sale to the curious,” rather than traded for necessities. While indigenous people sold other tiny versions of Native goods and objects as souvenirs, mokuks were one of the first items they miniaturized, perhaps because the baskets offered tourists a sample of both Native quilled birchbark basketry and food. The form of the mokuk existed long before its miniaturization; indigenous artists scaled the baskets down make them more portable for tourists.100

Henry Schoolcraft, who published a narrative of his expedition in the Great Lakes region in 1821, a year before he became a United States Indian Agent, witnessed the trading visits made

98 Thomas L. McKenny, Sketches of a Tour to the Lakes, of the Character and Customs of the Chippeway Indians and of Incidents Connected with the Treaty of Fond du Lac (Baltimore: Fielding Lucas, Jun’r, 1827), in Phillips, Trading Identities, 90-91.
99 Ibid.
100 The process of miniaturization existed in Anishinaabe artistic tradition as well, but these miniatures often had sacred functions. Phillips, Trading Identities, 75-59.
by Great Lakes people to Michilimackinac. His list of rush mats, mokuks, quilled moccasins, shot pouches, and “other fancy goods of Indian fabric” as items that were “generally in demand as articles of curiosity” comprised a large sample of the souvenirs created by Anishinaabe people in the 1820s.\textsuperscript{101} Tourists, missionaries, and traders collected these “curiosities” en masse. They were desirable to Victorian Americans, who admired exotic Native goods and sought examples of traditional craft before the extinction of indigenous groups occurred. This notion, put into motion by ethnographers who thought that indigenous populations were shrinking and feared the loss of their culture, was false. As indigenous communities faced assimilationist policies and land loss, they developed strategies to survive. Anishinaabe artists deliberately manufactured souvenir items to secure a place in an evolving economy defined by land loss and removal. These means were never guaranteed, but they understood and exploited the tourist market as a means to endure, both economically and culturally.

\textbf{The Miniature Mokuk at Mount Holyoke}

These tiny objects appealed to the missionary associated with the Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, who purchased the mokuk in the Great Lakes region. The mokuk is a true miniature; it stands at a mere 4 centimeters tall, and its base is 8 cm by 3 cm. The object fits neatly into the palm of the hand, making it easy to transport from Michilimackinac to Massachusetts. McKenny’s description of these “little receptacles,” as well as a photograph of a mokuk collected in 1820-21 and held at the Museum fur Volkerkunde in Vienna, Austria (Figure 2.4), both closely resemble the mokuk held by Mount Holyoke, indicating an Anishinaabe artist probably crafted it during the same time period. She folded birchbark, sewed it together with twined plant

fibers, and attached a cedar rim. According to Jim Northrup, a modern Ojibwe basket-maker from the Fond du Lac Reservation in Minnesota, the rims “determine the final shape” of the baskets. Northrup explained his process of making nooshkaachinaagan, or wild rice birchbark baskets, in a recent demonstration video made for Indian Country TV. While nooshkaachinaagan are a different shape than mokuks, both are birchbark containers made with similar materials. Northrup’s interview sheds light on the modes of thinking and craftsmanship that inform the creation of indigenous baskets.

Creating baskets did not begin when indigenous artists folded and sewed the birchbark, but with the harvesting of materials. The process of gathering natural resources depended on deep ecological knowledge, which was interconnected with Anishinaabe spirituality. While these practices have evolved over time, invoking the perspectives of modern artists can help shed light on past practices. Northrup explained his process of harvesting birchbark, which “starts with a prayer, and then, an offering of tobacco.” He looked for bark with “little lines, rather than big long ones,” and harvested it when it was full of oil, which made the bark more flexible. Drawing on his traditional knowledge, he determined that the best season to harvest birchbark was “when the deerflies first come out,” which varied from year to year.

The practice of making baskets was neither monolithic nor universal. Variations in craft and knowledge reflected the diversity of indigenous peoples in the region. Northrup’s statement on harvesting shares similarities with what Yvonne Keshick, a modern Odawa quill artist from the Little Traverse Bay Band, passed on from her teacher, Susan Shagonaby; that “the bark is

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103 Ibid.
ready to pick from the trees when the strawberries are ripe in June.” These two remarks demonstrate how indigenous knowledge reflected shared environmental insights, although with different details. Keshick also taught her audience—conservation staff from the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI)—that she “puts tobacco down at the first tree, general prayer for all the trees that I’m going to cut. We don’t cut every tree we come to. If the tree is stripping, we cut.” Created during a consultation session for an exhibit called “Beyond the Horizon: Anishinaabe Artists of the Great Lakes” at the NMAI in New York City, the video also highlighted two other quill artists: Mina and Theodore Toulouse, both from the Sagamok First Nation. During one segment, the three artists discussed how they prepared sweet grass, used in several parts of birchbark baskets. Whereas Keshik hung her sweet grass to dry, Mina Toulouse explained how her grandmother used to slap and rest it against the wood stove, a process that made it “stay green for a long, long time.” Despite these variations in practice between individuals and across generations, the core elements of birchbark basketry amongst Odawa and Ojibwe people remained linked.

These teachings can help us envision the creation of the miniature mokuk. After gathering the birchbark, the creator of the mokuk cut it into a pattern and then folded the basket before sewing the sides together. She then soaked the cedar rim in water, molding an oval (as Northrup described) and left it to dry so it could retain its shape before attaching it to the basket. The quillwork on the basket also involved several steps. The process of quilling began

105 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
107 Northrup, “Nagaajiwanaang - Jim Northrup shares his art of birch bark basket making.”
with the porcupine, whose quills were removed after death. Keshik stated that today, porcupines are acquired through “farmers, cottagers, and roadkill.” In the nineteenth century, indigenous people occasionally hunted porcupines or collected them after natural death. More commonly, “quills were collected by throwing a blanket over the unsuspecting porcupine and as the animal raised its quills in defense and wiggled out from underneath it, the quills would lodge in the blanket.” After removal, basket-makers soaked the quills in water to remove oils, then sometimes dyed them, depending on the artists’ preferences. They then punched small holes in birchbark with awls. Usually following a pattern carved into the bark, the artist inserted the quills into these carefully planned holes. Using a sharp implement such as a knife, “the excess quill was cut off flush with the bark, and because of the bark’s thickness, the quill would be held in place.” The Anishinaabe artist who created the mokuk held by Mount Holyoke quilled the objects with a similar technique. Traces of the original pattern etched onto the bark are still visible today in places where the quillwork has deteriorated. The dyes for the quills were natural in the nineteenth century, not synthetic. To keep the color true, indigenous artists used mordants, or substances that they added to the dye to prevent fading. McKenny described red, yellow, and green quillwork on the “mockocks” he observed, but blue and white quills also appear on the miniature mokuk held by Mount Holyoke. When basket-makers finished the quillwork, they inserted a second layer of bark into the interior of the box to preserve its structure and protect the quills.

The miniature mokuk is missing parts of this layer, and the remnants are peeling away on both of the shorter sides. Furthermore, several of the quills are missing from the design due to wear and tear over time. While conservators at the NMAI attempted to fix similar damage on birchbark items, Mina Toulouse did not advocate for this practice in all circumstances. She advised them, “There are some that come to me that are too old, too brittle, too dry, too damaged. The threads are rotting on this, I cannot repair it. It’s gone too far…let it live out its lifetime the way it is, you dispose of it, you burn it.”¹¹² Toulouse’s explanation represented a challenge to the mentality of conservation, which attempts foremost to preserve the baskets. She rejected the Western model of conservation in cases when repairing the quillwork or birchbark would be futile, recognizing the ephemerality of objects. This approach does not suggest that certain objects were designed to deteriorate, but that established conservation practices do not always consider indigenous knowledge systems. The mokuk held in Mount Holyoke’s collections is neither rotting nor falling apart, but it has sustained damage. Unfortunately, the wattap lid McKenny described went missing sometime between its donation and today. The indigenous artist attached the covers to the basket by inserting dyed quills into the lid and wrapping them around the rim (Figure 2.4). On the Mount Holyoke mokuk, two white quills are wrapped around each side of the rim. One set is broken from the removal of the lid. On the other side, the quills are wrapped around a small piece of cedar bark, which prevented damage to the quills themselves when it broke off from the lid as the owner removed it. On top of the basket, the owner or a museum employee tied a piece of plant fiber, perhaps to replace the lid and help the object keep its shape.

Residue of previous contents remains inside the basket—but it is dirt and other material, rather than maple sugar (Figure 2.6). Indeed, the majority of surviving mokuks are empty; the few that retain their tablespoons of sugar were “presumably collected more as model than as comestible.”\(^{113}\) When mokuks arrived in museum filled with maple sugar, the donors presumably wished to preserve a relic rather than to consume a commodity. The presence of dirt inside the mokuk held by Mount Holyoke raises significant questions about how the missionary and Seminary used the item. When and why did someone fill the container with dirt? The object’s “life” before its donation to the Seminary is not documented, but it was evidently modified after it became a part of the collections. An early Seminary employee wrote in pen on the bottom of the object “Basket of Maple Sugar made by the Indians” (Figure 2.7). The Seminary used this labeling practice for most of the “Indian objects” in the Missionary Cabinet. These archival traces show that the original contents were sugar; however, as the absence of the lid indicated, the original owner consumed the sugar and repurposed the box.

We can also compare the mokuk held by Mount Holyoke to those held in other collections to try to extrapolate the approximate date and location of its creation. The Image Appendix to this chapter shows several examples of mokuks. The miniature mokuk shown in Figure 2.4 is the most similar to the Mount Holyoke mokuk, and is currently held in the Museum für Volkerkunde in Vienna. It was collected in 1820-21 and has nearly the same dimensions as the Mount Holyoke object, differing only by one centimeter in height and length. The pattern and design are similar, and despite the missing lid on the Mount Holyoke mokuk, the one held in Vienna has quills placed in similar places around the rim, attaching the lid. These two mokuks resemble the one represented on a plate from Schoolcraft’s *Travels through the Northwestern...*

Regions of the United States (Figure 2.8). This drawing depicts the *mokuk* he saw on a visit to Michilimackinac in 1821. In contrast to the unquilled Wisconsin Ojibwe *mokuk* from 1823 (Figure 2.3), it is probable that the Mount Holyoke *mokuk* traces its provenience to Michilimackinac.

**Michilimackinac, a Native Place**

The miniature *mokuk* emblematized Michilimackinac’s history as a central trading location. Anishinaabe artists sold *mokuks* and other souvenirs there because the island was a traditional gathering place, where indigenous people engaged in exchange and diplomacy for millennia before the arrival of Europeans. Located near the intersection of Lake Michigan and Lake Huron, Michilimackinac lay at the crossroads of the Great Lakes. The system of waterways feeding into the Great Lakes fostered trade networks along which indigenous people traveled and exchanged items and ideas. Archaeological records bear witness to four millennia of interactions. Exotic raw materials and artisanal objects journeyed throughout the Northeast along a vast network of trails and waterways that stretched thousands of miles.¹¹⁴ When the missionary returned to the Seminary with the *mokuk* and miniature canoe, her path resembled the journeys indigenous people made for generations as they traveled through the Northeast with their goods. At the heart of this web was Michilimackinac, whose history reflects its central position.

Blackbird elucidated this past, dedicating a section of his *History* to “the earliest history of the Island of Mackinac, and why it is called ‘Michilimackinac’—which name has never been correctly translated by white historians, but which is here given according to our knowledge of this matter long before we came in contact with white races.”¹¹⁵ Contrary to the majority of

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¹¹⁴ **Phillips**, *Trading Identities*, 22.

historians who wrote about the area, Blackbird asserted the name did not mean “large turtle.” He criticized the former translation, contending that “Wherever those annalists, or those who write about the Island of Mackinac, obtain their information as to the definition of the word Michilimackinac, I don’t know, when our tradition is so direct and so clear with regard to the historical definition of that word.”

Rather, the name Michilimackinac referred to a “small independent tribe” confederated with the Odawa that inhabited the island when the Odawa lived at Manitoulin Island, which is situated to the north of Lake Huron. The Odawas and Ojibwes named Michilimackinac after the “Mi-shi-ne-macki naw-go,” the tribal name of the former inhabitants, who were “almost entirely annihilated” by the Senecas. Blackbird reported that this event took place “probably more than five or six hundred years ago,” situating this history in precolonial time.

The name the Ojiwba and Odawa employed for the island, “Mi-shi-ne-macki-nong,” is the locative case of the noun “Mi-shi-ne-macki naw-go.” Blackbird’s history, rooted in longstanding indigenous knowledge of the island, presented Michilimackinac as a simultaneously contested and collective Native space.

When Schoolcraft visited the island, he disparaged the “savages” who “resort to the island for the purposes of exchanging their furs, for blankets, knives, and other articles.” When he criticized the Anishinaabe groups who gathered at Michilimackinac to peacefully exchange goods, he neglected the deep history of the island as an indigenous gathering place. Schoolcraft also failed to see, or ignored, how the Anishinaabe resisted governmental control by adapting their material culture to the souvenir market and maintaining mobility practices. Throughout the

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116 Ibid., 19.
117 Ibid., 23.
118 Ibid., 19-20.
early nineteenth century, Anishinaabe groups endeavored to follow traditional subsistence patterns of seasonal hunting and gathering despite Euro-American encroachment on their homelands, continuing to meet at Michilimackinac to trade biannually. Schoolcraft noted this phenomenon, remarking that “their visits are periodical, being generally made after their spring and fall hunts.” The voyages were spiritually significant to Anishinaabe communities, who travelled “in our long bark canoes, loaded with sugar, furs, deer skins, prepared venison for summer use, bear’s oil, and bear meat prepared in oil, deer tallow, and sometimes a lot of honey” early each spring to gather and feast for the dead before planting corn and vegetables for the summer. The voyages Ojibwe and Odawa made to Michilimackinac to sell souvenir objects and trade other goods in the early nineteenth century emulated these journeys.

Schoolcraft made his government-sponsored expedition, directed by the War Department, “to develop the physical character and resources of all parts of our country…through the territories of the most remote and hostile tribes of savages.” He dedicated his account to John C. Calhoun, who was Secretary of War at the time and later advocated for Indian removal. Schoolcraft thus rooted his commentary in the expansionist policies of the early nineteenth century, which developed into the 1830 Indian Removal Act. Anishinaabe people experienced significant land loss in the nineteenth century, which coincided with their decision to manufacture objects for the souvenir market. As Anishinaabe groups transacted with the government, they were careful to retain enough of their homelands to maintain their traditional trading and subsistence practices for as long as they could. Blackbird disclosed one form of resistance to the processes of land-based disfranchisement on Michilimackinac: “It is related in

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120 Ibid., 122.
121 Blackbird, History of the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, 45.
122 Schoolcraft, Narrative Journal of Travels, iii.
our traditions that at the time when the Chippewas occupied the island they ceded it to the United States Government, but reserved a strip of land all around the island as far as a stone throw from its water’s edge as their encampment grounds when they might come to the island to trade or for other business. When White-Ferry counted “fifty wigwams upon the shore” of Michilimakinac, she identified the result of this agreement.

This savvy negotiation reflected widespread strategies for cultural and economic survival among Anishinaaabe communities, but these communities still experienced devastating land loss and seizure, as well as removal policies. The map of major Potawatomi land cessions between 1795 and 1833 illustrates the results of treaties and policies that were heavily contested (Figure 2.5). Other Anishinaaabe groups faced land loss; for example, the 1807 Treaty of Detroit conferred Odawa, Ojibwe, Wyandot, and Potawatomi lands to the United States. The Potawatomi signed more than forty treaties in an effort to stay in their homes. By 1830, they were sharing their homelands with more than 1.5 million non-Native settlers. In 1838, more than 850 Potawatomi were removed from their tiny reservations and forced to set out for Kansas. So many died that the journey was called the “Trail of Death.” Anishinaaabe communities’ manufacture of traditional objects for sale took place amidst these policies.

Missionary Presence at Michilimackinac

The growing presence of missionaries in addition to traders on the island spoke to the assimilationist attitudes shared by most Americans. Mary Lyon had connections to two

124 Amanda White Ferry, *Extracts from letters and diaries, 1823-1833*, Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections: RG 8 (LD 7084.8 White).
missionary families living at Michilimackinac around the same time as Schoolcraft’s journeys. These families were the Ferrys and the Whites, both entangled in the institutional history of Mount Holyoke. Amanda White, born in the same year as Mary Lyon (1797), was also from Ashfield, Massachusetts. She and Lyon likely attended Sanderson Academy together. Lyon taught her sister Hannah White at the Buckland Winter School for Girls. In 1823 Amanda White married William Montague Ferry, the minister at Michilimackinac.126 Their daughter, Amanda Harwood Ferry, graduated from Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in 1847.127 At Michilimackinac, William Ferry became the first Superintendent of the Protestant Mission to the Indians established by the United Foreign Mission Society in 1823. A mission school opened that November, where his wife taught. According to a report on the Old Mission Church on Mackinac Island, “The Mission was not designed for the Indians of the immediate vicinity alone, nor for those of any one tribe. The children came from every band bordering on the upper lakes, and some from the Hudson’s Bay Territory, the banks of the Mississippi River, the Red River of the North, and other remote parts. The Indians, in large numbers, gathered every summer on the island to receive their annuities from the government and for purposes of trade and excitement.”128 Schoolcraft, who referred directly to these “purposes of trade and excitement” in his description of the “mokeocks” in 1821, two years before the establishment of the Protestant Mission, called for the establishment of missionary schools. He wrote, “There is neither school or preaching upon the island…there appears therefore in the present society of the ’Mackinac the

126 “Old Mission Church of Mackinack Island,” second edition, Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections: RG 8 (LD 7084.8 White), 5-6.
127 Polly Kaufman, “Genealogical Information regarding the family of Thomas White of Ashfield, MA,” Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections: RG 8 (LD 7084.8 White).
128 “Old Mission Church of Mackinack Island,” 1-2.
want of a preacher, a school-master, an attorney, and a physician,—of merchants there are always too many.”129 The White-Ferry family responded directly to his call, filling the positions of both preacher and school-master.

The Protestant Mission was the first missionary school on Michilimackinac, beginning an era of Native history that deserves to be acknowledged immediately for what it was: a destructive process that aimed to strip indigenous peoples from their cultures, spiritualities, and languages, usually without their consent. I do not seek to undermine the agency of the Native people who converted to Christianity, who decided to affiliate with missionaries for multiple reasons, such as the acquisition of literacy. Blackbird, who attended missionary school, wielded literacy to challenge colonial policies and publish his History. At the same time, the devaluation of Native religions and spirituality through the missionary process requires a critical approach.

While French Catholic missions existed in the region, Protestants brandished a form of Christianity that was significantly less tolerant to Native cultures. The Native children, who often attended these schools through desperation or coercion, received information about how to be “civilized” from missionaries and the Bible. While the missionary schools differed from the residential boarding schools that many Native children were forced to attend in the 1880s, their practices foreshadowed the 1892 proposal of Captain Richard H. Pratt, founder of the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, to “kill the Indian, and save the man.”130 When McKenny visited

129 Schoolcraft, Narrative Journal of Travels Through the Northwestern Regions of the United States, 121. According to the pamphlet published on the Old Mission Church of Mackinac Island, Schoolcraft lived on the island for eight years as the United States Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the Northwest, from 1833-1841. He approved of the Mission School, writing that many of the boys “became teachers and interpreters and traders’ clerks over wide space of wilderness where they disseminated Gospel principles. Many of the girls turned out to be ladies of finished education and manners, and married officers of the army or citizens” (5).

Michilimackinac around 1827, he wrote of the children, “One hundred and seven little foresters 
eat and be happy. In personal cleanliness and neatness, in behavior, in attainments in various 
branches, no children, white or red, excel them.”  

His paternalistic attitude, coupled with his 
belief in the “civilizing” of Native children, characterize an aspect of the problematic 
relationship between Christian missions and Native people. Referring to the children as 
“foresters” was patronizing and racially charged—he equated them with what he perceived to be 
uncivilized wilderness. This characterization was unfounded; Anishinaabe groups traveled 
through established Native geographies to Michilimackinac. Yet non-Native visitors were often 
unable to see past their pre-established notions of Native ignorance to understand these deep 
knowledge. When Amanda White-Ferry’s mother visited her daughter at Michilimackinac in 
1827, she wrote, “Sabbath morning—saw for the first time all the family assembled for their 
meals. Oh, what a sight! One hundred and twelve of the poor, ignorant, despised natives gathered 
from the wilderness where ignorance and superstition reign, and placed where the wants of their 
perishing bodies are amply supplied, and the wants of their never-dying souls are made the 
object of the greatest care and unwearied love of the missionaries.” 

Contrasting the ignorance 
of the “savage” with the light of Christianity, White associated “wilderness” with “superstition” 
and ignored Native religions. Many missionaries shared this attitude, including Jacob Hitchcock, 
who wrote in an 1845 letter to Lyon that he “thought of those who had left the Sem. and are 
scattered in different parts of the earth….among the Aborginies of this continent, in many places 
in our own beloved country, I see here and there a ‘polished stone’ sparkling like a diamond in

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*American Indians: Writings by the “Friends of the Indian” 1880–1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: 

131 “Old Mission Church of Mackinack Island,” 3.

the midst of surrounding darkness."  His language of “darkness” obscured longstanding and complex indigenous religious traditions. The propagandized statements about the success of the missions were also not tied to material reality. White-Ferry’s mother claimed that “the wants of their perishing bodies are amply supplied,” but as the souvenir market evidenced, government annuities and missionary support did not provide enough money for Anishinaabe families to survive after losing access to the natural resources of their homelands.

The pamphlet published in 1905 by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions about the Old Mission Church on Mackinac Island detailed the “success” of the missionary students: “In a number of instances we have had children, from entire ignorance of the letters, within eight months learn to read quite intelligibly in the Testament, and to write a fair hand.” While English-language literacy was a useful skills to have in a changing socioeconomic landscape, these congratulatory messages did not reflect Native children’s future prospects. In the eighty years between the arrival of the White-Ferry family in 1823 and the Old Mission Church publication, Anishinaabe communities in Michigan continued to experience land loss, impoverishment, and abuse. The money allotted by the government to the missions ended up in the hands of non-Natives; Anishinaabe communities were rarely the beneficiaries of these funds. Blackbird, who believed that “the same God who created the white man created the red man of the forest” thereby entitling Native people “the benefits of civilization, education, and Christianity,” exposed the fraudulent actions of the United States government:

Soon as the Indian youths receive an education, they should be allowed to have some employment among the whites, in order to encourage them in the pursuits of civilization and to exercise their ability according to the means and extent of their education, instead

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133 Jacob Hitchcock, Letter, [July 1845?], Kidron, C[herokee] N[ation], to Mary Lyon, South Hadley, MA. Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections: RG 27.1 (LD 7096.6 x1846 Hitchcock).
134 “Old Mission Church of Mackinack Island,” 3.
of being a class of persons continually persecuted and robbed of their little possessions….This was my plan and my proposition at the council of Detroit, in the treaty of 1855, as there was quite a large sum of money set apart and appropriated by the Government solely to pay for the education of those Indian youths who should be educated in a civilized community, instead of committing this sum of money to the hands of the preachers and teachers in the missions among the Ottawas.\footnote{Blackbird, \textit{History of the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians}, 98-99. While Blackbird was careful to support Christian ideals, he also refused the notion that Anishinaabe people were “entirely infidels and idolators; for they believed that there is a Supreme Ruler of the Universe, the Creator of all things, the Great Spirit, to which they offer worship and sacrifices in a certain form” (14).} 

The state of Michigan did not adopt Blackbird’s plan. His criticism questioned the effectiveness of missionary presence and its goal of “civilization,” thereby revealing the hypocrisy behind Americans’ settler colonial presence in the Great Lakes region. The government shrouded its colonial aims in Christian ideology, and missionaries played an integral role in the disfranchisement and impoverishment of Anishinaabe communities.

\textbf{Anishinaabe People and Scenic Tourism}

Missionary presence in the region did not particularly influence the development of the miniature \textit{mokuk}; while missionaries brought these souvenirs home as relics of the work they were doing, the \textit{mokuk} itself existed for sale to American visitors in the Great Lakes region. The \textit{mokuk} as a missionary item poses several compelling questions about the relationship between Christians and Natives, including a paradoxical desire for Native goods representing a traditional or “authentic” way of life, despite the missionaries’ commitment to “civilizing” indigenous people. As a souvenir good, the \textit{mokuk}s spoke to the desires of middle-class visitors generally, rather than missionaries. For these visitors, the miniature \textit{mokuk} was representational on several levels; it symbolized a version of the goods circulating in the trading network surrounding places like Michilimackinac as well as the Native craft of quilled birchbark basketry and a taste of the
“exotic” food of the region. The souvenir market shared many of the qualities of previously established trading networks, including the commodification of Native goods and the imbalanced power structures which shaped the buying and selling of these items. Yet it also differed from the trading network due to its emphasis on the aesthetic and personal desires of the consumer, who was most often white and middle class. When a missionary purchased the item, she inadvertently helped support Anishinaabe artists who adapted their material culture in the context of scenic tourism to supplement annuities and rations from the government and Christian missions, which did not provide sufficient means for survival.

Until the 1810s and 20s, visitors to the Great Lakes region of the United States and Canada had mostly been traders, soldiers, ethnographers, missionaries, and explorers. Developments in transportation in the nineteenth century made this region more accessible to a growing middle class. The construction of turnpikes and canals, coupled with improvements to stagecoach services and steamboat technology, brought visitors to places like Niagara Falls and Yellowstone National Park. These “natural” attractions also included Native people, for whom these places, located in their homelands, were contested grounds. White visitors rarely distinguished between scenic destinations and indigenous people; the notion of the “noble savage” linked the Indian inextricably to nature in the American consciousness. When McKenny described Native children as “foresters,” he reproduced this mindset. When they did separate Native people from the environment, they condemned their presence in these locations as distractions from the spiritual experience of nature.

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Missionary works from the nineteenth century supported the notion that tourist destinations were a type of sacred space for Americans. In her only publication, the 1843 book *A Missionary Offering*, Mary Lyon compared “our country’s grand scene of the sublime in nature” to the nature of missionary work. In circuitous and flowery language, she denounced the “traveller, who stops a day to rest and visit Niagara,” arguing he knew “naught of the communings of that spirit, which spends week after week in beholding and admiring the ever increasing wonders of that hallowed spot, till his eyes see a greatness and a glory in the falling waters, which no other eyes have ever seen.”138 For Lyon, Niagara was a sacred place. The falls illuminated how Christians should regard the Foreign Missionary Society, which, like nature, was “our nation’s grand feature of the morally sublime. The more we see and the more we know, the more we admire, and the more we love.”139 Lyon thus supported the assessment that the presence of “souvenir shops selling Indian bead work and feather fans” at Niagara Falls constituted an interruption of the visitor’s spiritual experience of scenic destinations.140 The missionary who purchased the miniature mokuk in Michilimackinac subverted Lyon’s beliefs, but only briefly. She ultimately justified this purchase within the context of her Christian work, sending it to the Female Seminary to advertise and celebrate the institution’s missionary calling.

Anishinaabe communities understood their relationship to the land differently than missionaries or visitors did. As Blackbird relayed,

* I thought my people were very happy in those days, when they were all by themselves and possessed a wide spread of land, and no one to quarrel with them as to where they should make their gardens, or take timber, or make sugar. And fishes of all kinds were

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139 Ibid.
140 Sears, *Sacred Places*, 17.
plentiful in the Harbor. A hook anywheres in the bay, and at any time of the year, would catch Mackinaw trout, many as one would want.\textsuperscript{141}

After “the white people came and intermingled with the tribes,” Ojibwe and Odawa people lost the ability to use and define the land for themselves due to broken treaties, missionary presence, and scenic tourism.\textsuperscript{142} Nevertheless, they preserved their relationship to the land by continuing to craft traditional objects and traveling through the Great Lakes region along established networks of trails to market their goods. When they gathered birchbark, spruce roots, cedar, and porcupine quills to make a \textit{mokuk}, Anishinaabe artists defied civilizing missions and government-sponsored land loss. Forced to enter the capitalist economy, they exploited the existing market of visitors, missionaries, and traders to scrape together a living through their material culture. The goods and money they received in exchange for these objects were not adequate payments for their labor or craft, but souvenirs helped Anishinaabe communities persist. As Mina Toulouse explained, quilled birchbark baskets have been used by the Odawa and Ojibwe people throughout history as boxes to store dried food, seeds, herbs, and medicines. Reflecting on the arrival of Europeans, she remarked, “I don’t think Odawa people could have survived without the use of the birchbark tree.”\textsuperscript{143} Her gratitude to birchbark for its role in indigenous survivance speaks to the importance of \textit{mokuks} and other objects in the study of Anishinaabe history.

**Souvenir Art and the “Authenticity Paradigm”**

From indigenous perspectives, the process of creating the \textit{mokuk} also did not depart from traditional basketry practices. Gathering materials, assembling the basket, and quilling the design were familiar and meaningful tasks. Nevertheless, an “authenticity paradigm”—the notion that

\textsuperscript{141} Blackbird, 50.
\textsuperscript{142} For further discussion of these treaties, see Blackbird, 51-52.
\textsuperscript{143} Toulouse, Toulouse, and Keshick, “Conservation Consultation for Beyond the Horizon Anishinaabe Artists of the Great Lakes.”
souvenir goods are not authentic because indigenous artists created them for white audiences in mass quantities—continues to infiltrate museum practices and shape the interpretation of so-called “tourist art.” Hjalmar Stolpe, a student of the cultural evolution of Native material culture in the early twentieth century, wrote in 1896 that the “obvious traces of the white man’s industry…prove that the style is no longer genuine, but spoiled by European importations.”

Museums shared his perspective well into the twentieth century, neglecting souvenirs in displays. Because these objects “displayed the traces of aboriginal peoples’ negotiation of Western artistic and economic systems,” they “had to be excluded from the formal programs of collecting and exhibiting in order to support the standard museum representation of Native Americans as other, as marginalized and as premodern.” This attitude failed to account for the creative choices Anishinaabe artists made when they adapted their material culture to a consumer market. More insidiously, the exclusion of souvenir objects relegated Native people to the past. Museums thus constructed their own problematic versions of indigeneity by refusing to display objects that showcased Native modernity or adaptability.

A further consideration is that because souvenir goods were mass produced, indigenous artists tended to diminish their quality to keep up with consumer demand. The non-Native buyers of these objects did not expect their souvenirs to hold up over a lifetime of use, as Native people did their own material culture, created for internal use within their communities. The

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145 Ibid.

simplification of souvenir goods as “inauthentic” or “low-quality,” and therefore not appropriate for display, excludes a large part of the objects held by the Mount Holyoke Art Museum from interpretation in future exhibits, including the mokuk. This exclusion also disrupts the process of decolonization, which seeks to challenge Western museum practices, such as the authenticity paradigm, and uncover indigenous histories within the context of colonialism, such as missionary presence on Michilimackinac. The miniature mokuk existed because the processes of colonialism in Michigan made it impossible for Anishinaabe communities to survive without selling souvenirs. When museums relegate souvenir objects to storage, they ignore the creative role Native artists played in adapting their material culture to a consumer market. This decision also reduces Native people to passive actors in colonial systems by refusing to admit the role souvenir goods played in resisting assimilationist goals from missionaries and government officials. These reductions are inherently problematic.

The miniature mokuk and other souvenir items are historic sources that provide evidence for Anishinaabe presence and continuance in the Great Lakes region throughout the nineteenth century. Blackbird’s decision to write and publish his History was not the only example of indigenous agency in the region. The mokuk reveals a people’s history, with Anishinaabe communities as central actors who negotiated their cultural and economic survival with missionaries, tourists, and government officials. When museums represent souvenir items in their displays, they acknowledge that indigenous communities evolved and survived. The Mount Holyoke College Art Museum should make this history accessible to the public by including the mokuk or other souvenirs in future displays of indigenous art. The museum has the opportunity to engage visitors in a dynamic exhibit on indigenous history and the institutional legacies of missionary work. Using decolonizing methodologies, this exhibit could showcase modern
Anishinaabe art in addition to historic objects, teaching visitors about the continuance of indigenous communities through the present day.

Another step would be to engage modern Anishinaabe craftspeople in the interpretation of the miniature mokuk, as the Art Museum did in the Spring 2016 Collection Spotlight *People Will Know Our Names*. Curated by Lynda Teller Pete, a fifth-generation weaver from the Newcomb and Two Grey Hills areas of the Navajo Nation, this spotlight focused on a circa 1935-1940 Navajo weaving of Yei figures produced for non-Native consumers. Teller Pete explained in her text panel,

What kind of weaver would make a decision to weave sacred ceremonial dancers, animals, and icons into their weaving for the market? A weaver that needs to feed, clothe and care for his or her family.¹⁴⁷

Native artists created and sold souvenirs to survive, but their stories live on through their descendants. Teller Pete remarked, “Unlike our elder Navajo weavers, people will know our names, they will see our faces, know our stories, and hear our songs and prayers on each tapestry that we create.”¹⁴⁸ Her perspective as a modern Navajo weaver demonstrated the value of inviting indigenous artists to tell their own detailed stories in museum exhibits that interpret historic Native objects, particularly those whose creators are unidentified. These collaborative processes are in line with Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s request for indigenous peoples to tell their own stories, in their own ways, for their own purposes.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.
This miniature *mokuk* is held by the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum in the Missionary Collection. An Anishinaabe artist crafted it from birchbark, porcupine quills, cedar, and spruce roots or sweet grass for the souvenir market.

Image courtesy of the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum.
This miniature canoe is listed in a catalogue of articles sent by missionaries to Mount Holyoke Female Seminary before 1892. Like the miniature mokuk, it is a birchbark model with quilled patterns. These two items likely entered the collections together. Image courtesy of the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum.
This large mokuk has a geometric pattern created by scraping away darker layers of bark to reveal the lighter layer underneath. The rim is wrapped in spruce roots or sweet grass, not porcupine quills.

*Mokuk*, probably Wisconsin Ojibwe, collected by Gian Constantino Belrami in 1823, l. 29 x w. 27.5 x h. 15.5 cm, Beltrami Collection 31, Museo Civico di Scienze Naturali ‘E. Caffi,’ Bergamo, Italy, in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art, 1700-1900* (Hong Kong: University of Washington Press, 1998), 170.
This miniature *mokuk* has a quilled floral curvilinear pattern and was likely created for the souvenir market. It includes the wattap lid described by McKenny, attached by quills found in a similar place on the *mokuk* held by the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum.

Figure 2.5

Map showing major Potawatomi land cessions between 1795 and 1833. The Potawatomi are another Anishinaabe group, which experienced land losses, seizures, and removals through treaties and policies that were heavily contested. For example, the 1807 Treaty of Detroit conferred Odawa, Ojibwe, Wyandot, and Potawatomi lands. The Potawatomi signed more than forty treaties in an effort to stay in their homes; by 1830, they were sharing their homelands with more than 1.5 million non-Native settlers. In 1838, more than 850 Potawatomi were removed from their tiny reservations and forced to set out for Kansas. So many died that the journey was called the “Trail of Death.”

Information and map from Nation to Nation: Treaties Between the United States and American Indian Nations, an exhibit from September 21, 2014-Spring 2020 at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C.
Figure 2.6

The interior of the miniature *mokuk* held in the collections of the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, showing the residue of dirt and other material. Image courtesy of the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum.
Figure 2.7

The bottom of the miniature *mokuk* held in the collections of the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum. An early Seminary employee wrote in pen on the bottom of the object “Basket of Maple Sugar made by the Indians.”

Image courtesy of the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum.
This plate shows a miniature *mokuk* (no. 3, top center), along with multiple other indigenous souvenirs, including a moccasin and a canoe.

Wabanaki Wonderworks:  
Tomah Joseph’s Birchbark Objects

The chief cause of magic power among the Indians is that of Will. It manifests itself in many forms, mere courage being one.  
Passamaquoddy birchbark artist Tomah Joseph to the Maine state government, 1895

We intend also, to remove the fear, that the life of the red man will pass away unwritten, and this is written because there is an abundance of evidence showing that there is a general desire among the people that some one ought to write it now if ever.  
Penobscot writer Joseph Nicolar’s *The Life and Traditions of the Red Man* (1893), 95

You don’t make the trees; you don’t make the land; the Great Spirit makes the trees and land; Passamaquoddy don’t steal bark. Indian land, Indian trees, Indian bark, Indian water. Great while ago the Great Spirit give this all to Passamaquoddy; white man steal Indian land and everything.  
Passamaquoddy political advisor Joseph Stanislaus to property-owner Ichabod Chadbourne, 1835
Tomah Joseph, a Passamaquoddy birchbark artist from Peter Dana Point, Maine, or Motahkomikuk (Indian Township) Reservation, disclosed in an 1895 letter to the Maine state government that “the chief cause of magic power among the Indians is that of Will. It manifests itself in many forms, mere courage being one.” Joseph carefully recounted a Passamaquoddy story to these government officials. In the story, a young Native man met a ghost in the woods while out visiting girls in the middle of the night. The ghost fought madly, but the man returned his blows because “he was one of those whose blood and courage go up, but never down; he could die, but never give in until dead.” The altercation continued until daybreak; “when the first sun-ray shone on him he became insensible, and when he awoke it was as if from a sleep.” The man turned to his side and saw a “large, old, decayed log, covered in moss. He remembered that during the fight he had seemed once to plunge his fist, by a violent blow, completely into the enemy up to his elbow, and there was a hole in it corresponding to this wound.” He defeated the ghost, which transformed into a log, and thus became “another man, and a terrible one….He had all the strength of five strong men, and all the might and magic of the Spirit.”150 With this account, Joseph relayed not only the power of one’s will in m’téoulin, but his own determination to disseminate Passamaquoddy creation stories.151 Like the Penobscot writer Joseph Nicolar,

150 Tomah Joseph, “The Power of One’s Will,” Letter to the Maine State Government, 1895, in Siobhan Senier, ed., Dawnland Voices: An Anthology of Indigenous Writing from New England (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 168-169. This anthology was one of the first to include collaborative input from a range of tribal editors, as well as to compile works from indigenous writers from this specific region of the Native Northeast. Dawnland Voices published previously hard-to-access sources to make them more widely available to communities and non-Native scholars. This study draws from many of these sources.

151 Tomah Joseph uses m’téoulin and magic power interchangeably; m’téoulin is also a term for a religious leader. See Joseph Treat and Micah A. Pawling, Wabanaki Homeland and the State of Maine (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 15.
Joseph narrated these Wabanaki stories in writing to preserve traditional knowledge. Both indigenous authors intended to “remove the fear, that the life of the red man will pass away unwritten.” By recording Wabanaki oral traditions, Joseph and Nicolar ensured that future generations of Penobscot and Passamaquoddy people would have access to their cultural heritage.

Nicolar self-published his book, *The Life and Traditions of the Red Man*, in 1893. While Nicolar called attention to the fact that he did not have the “proper education to do such work,” he affirmed, “I have undertaken the work and have done it in my own way; have given the full account of all the traditions as I have gathered them from my people.” Nicolar spent his life “in the researches of [his] people’s past life, beginning in [his] early boyhood days to the present time.” His work was primarily dedicated to oral tradition, but he also detailed his knowledge of traditional material culture and the Penobscot language, including place names he found “to have been corrupted by the white man in trying to speak the original words as were given by the red man.” Nicolar’s book corrected not only these linguistic errors, but the Wabanaki stories themselves. Asserting that he was “one of the descendants of the remnants of that once numerous and most powerful race,” Nicolar “[deemed] it proper to state that there have been no historical works of the white man, nor any other written sources from any source quoted.” He deliberately laid aside “all prophesies, theories and ideas of the educated and intelligent of all races” because he intended his book to show Wabanaki traditions as Native people understood them. The narrative drew comparisons between Wabanaki and biblical stories, but Nicolar ensured that the

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153 Ibid., 95-96.
154 Ibid., 198.
155 Ibid., 98.
Wabanaki stories were told by a Native person without external interpretation by ethnologists. He wrote in English and juxtaposed Wabanaki beliefs with Christianity because his upbringing included exposure to both of these worldviews, which made the book appear more legitimate to non-Native readers and ensured it would reach a broader audience. But Nicolar’s book was already powerful because he took control of the narrative of Penobscot history and oral tradition, and recounted his deep knowledge for the general public—both Native communities and interested whites.

Both Joseph and Nicolar resolved to record Wabanaki oral tradition on their own terms. Nicolar chose published writing as his tool for dissemination. When he self-published his book, he reclaimed control of the Penobscot stories that ethnologists gathered and rewrote for a non-Native audience. Using the same format as these ethnologists—an English-language book—Nicolar deliberately inserted his Penobscot perspective into the canon of writing about Northeastern Native cultures. Nicolar also served as a Penobscot representative to the Maine State Legislature from 1859-1860 and again in 1865, 1881, and 1885, where he engaged the government with Wabanaki affairs and demands. Joseph’s letter to the Maine state government proves that he shared Nicolar’s political activism and desire to preserve Wabanaki creation stories, which were two factors that drove Nicolar to self-publish his book. Joseph’s decision to address his letter to the government indicates he was politically aware of the place Passamaquoddy people had in the state of Maine, and wished to proclaim the legitimacy of Wabanaki beliefs such as m’téoulin. Like Nicolar, Joseph also reached out to the public to disseminate Wabanaki cultural knowledge, but he chose a different medium: birchbark art.

Throughout his life, Joseph crafted birchbark objects to give or sell to non-Native visitors to Campobello Island, New Brunswick, where he worked as a fishing and canoe guide during the summer. While many Wabanaki people sold their baskets or other objects as souvenirs, Joseph’s birchbark items were unique because he used them to represent Passamaquoddy oral tradition, lifeways, and language. Joseph illustrated on birchbark what Nicolar put to paper. Whereas Nicolar’s book invoked the European tradition of alphabetic literacy to express Wabanaki oral tradition, Joseph employed the Wabanaki tradition of *wikhegan*, or writing on birchbark, to depict creation stories.

This chapter analyzes three of Joseph’s birchbark objects to explore how he transmitted his cultural identity and preserved Passamaquoddy traditional knowledge: a *molocessinut*, or glove box (Figure 3.1), a *wikhikoninut*, or picture frame (Figure 3.2), and a *tulehpinut*, or playing card box (Figure 3.3).\(^{157}\) The Abbe Museum in Bar Harbor, Maine displayed each object during the summer of 2015 in an exhibit called *Coming Home*, in which Wabanaki community curators worked with Abbe curatorial staff to select and borrow objects from museums in the Northeast.\(^{158}\) The *molocessinut* and the *tulehpinut* were on loan from the Boston Children’s Museum in Boston, Massachusetts, while the *wikhikoninut* came from the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts. These three birchbark objects show how Joseph

\(^{157}\) Abbe Museum, “*Coming Home* Gallery Guide,” accessed March 2016, [http://abbemuseum.org/exhibits/ComingHomeGalleryGuide.pdf](http://abbemuseum.org/exhibits/ComingHomeGalleryGuide.pdf), 4. The guide also provided a note on language: “Other pieces, like Tomah Joseph’s work, were developed as part of the tourist trade, and did not have specific names. In order to name them, Museum Educator George Neptune, Passamaquoddy, worked with his grandmother and linguist Connor Quinn to name some of these objects. The word, used for picture frame, has the root word of *wikhikon*, meaning a drawing or design, and the ending –*inut*, denoting a container. Thus, a picture frame in Passamaquoddy would literally translate as a “drawing holder.” The same is true for *tulehpinut* and *molocessinut*, with the roots *tulehp* meaning playing card and *molocess* meaning glove.”

\(^{158}\) Ibid.
communicated through etched images, words, and designs. Facing land loss and the disruption of traditional fishing and hunting practices, Joseph and other nineteenth-century Wabanaki people struggled to survive. Through selling objects to tourists in the souvenir market, writing and narrating oral tradition stories, and working as a fishing and canoe guide on Campobello Island, Joseph preserved his cultural traditions in an evolving economy. He evoked Wabanaki oral tradition on birchbark to translate elements of his culture to non-Native tourists, enable the transmission of knowledge over time, and create an original style of art for sale as souvenirs. His dynamic pieces demonstrate Wabanaki cultural transformation as a nineteenth-century phenomenon. In his letter to the Maine state government, Joseph explained that “a very important part of m ’toulin is the materials employed. Among the Indians, very commonplace articles are employed indifferently. The magic consists not in them, but in the magician and his methods….He takes the objects suggested, and with them performs his wonderworks.”¹⁵⁹ Like the protagonist who fought against the ghost, Joseph persevered through his birchbark art, employing traditional Passamaquoddy objects as a method of resisting colonialism.

**Land-Based Disfranchisement and “Indian Work”**

Every summer, Joseph traveled from his home at Peter Dana Point, Maine, where he served the Passamaquoddy community in multiple capacities, including as tribal governor for at least one term, to Campobello Island, New Brunswick, where he established a site near Welshpool to sell Native-produced items (Figure 3.4).¹⁶⁰ He also worked as a canoe and hunting guide for wealthy summer residents of the island. Warm relationships existed between sportsmen and their guides, Joan A. Lester has argued in a study of Joseph’s work, citing an interview with

James Mixter, the grandson of Charles Freedom Eaton, who hunted and fished with Joseph. Mixter attested that his “family always emphasized the close relationship between my grandfather and Tomah Jo as one of mutual respect, affection, and equality.”

But while Lester’s analysis aptly outlined some of these dynamics, it overlooked the context of the larger historical context behind what anthropologist Tom McFeat has called “Indian Work,” which included basket making, guiding “sport” fishermen and hunters, and manufacturing other traditionally “Native” objects such as snowshoes.

The Wabanaki people who did this work engaged in the market economy because of land-based disfranchisement. Coupled with the assimilationist U.S. and Canadian policies of the nineteenth century, which sought to fix Native people on the land through farming instead of seasonal mobility patterns of hunting and fishing, the loss of land made “Indian Work” necessary for cultural and economic survival. Mixter’s perception of equality between Joseph and his grandfather did not include the inherently unequal reality of labor for the Passamaquoddy people who worked for wealthy families because they could no longer rely on their traditional subsistence practices.

Despite the unequal nature of “Indian Work,” Native people developed these methods of endurance to resist the policies that intended to make their traditional lifeways impossible. In 1882, a Canadian Indian agent lamented that the Mohawk people at Akwesasne (St. Regis, New York) refused to follow their white neighbors’ farming methods, preferring to produce traditional objects for sale. “Consequently basket-making, ax-handle manufacturing, bead work, moccasin-

\[\text{\textsuperscript{161}}\text{ Ibid., 7.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{162}}\text{ Tom McFeat, “Space and Work in Maliseet Basket-Making,” published in } A\text{ Key into the Language of Woodsplint Baskets } (\text{Washington: American Indian Archaeological Institute, 1987}), 65.\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{163}}\text{ When employing the term “disfranchisement,” the franchise I am referring to is not the right to vote, but rather the land-based privileges granted to the Wabanaki by the Massachusetts and Maine governments in treaties.}\]
making and other Indian handicraft, have to be resorted to, in order to supply the deficit,” he complained. “And to dispose of these articles the Indians have to visit numerous places, and thus their old, and to them, congenial habit of wandering about the country is fostered, which is attended with evil results to them, morally and materially.” The agent protested the Mohawk community’s defiance of colonial policies and criticized the moral and material effects of “wandering,” which was a term employed to invalidate indigenous mobility practices. Native people did not roam aimlessly in the wilderness, but moved strategically between established and remembered geographies. Despite his objections, the agent witnessed how Native communities ensured the continuance of traditional crafting and mobility practices. Joseph’s production of birchbark items and movement through Wabanaki homelands were deliberate acts of resistance to colonial processes, including the establishment of the international border between the United States and Canada through Passamaquoddy homelands, the illegal sale of Wabanaki lands through the violation of treaties, and the attempts by landowners and government officials to prevent indigenous access to natural resources.

Joseph’s movement through Passamaquoddy homelands each summer traversed two countries as a result of the establishment of the international border between the United States and Canada. In a series of border negotiations in 1798 and 1817, the state of Massachusetts and the province of New Brunswick established the international border along the St. Croix River, which ran through the center of Passasmaquoddy homelands (Figure 3.4). Joseph, born in 1837, grew up navigating the border between the United States and Canada, insisting through his

165 Treat and Pawling, Wabanaki Homeland and the State of Maine, 3.
summer journeys between the two countries that Passamaquoddy ancestral geographies endured. When he travelled from Peter Dana Point to Campobello, he moved through Wabanaki territory in a birchbark canoe, portaging between major waterways and relying on his knowledge of these rivers’ rips, falls, and carries. For Joseph and other Passamaquoddy people, this territory, connected by a vast network of thoroughfares via water and land, continued to be navigable by traditional means of travel, despite the colonial imposition of a border. Furthermore, these lands remained homelands, which Joseph acknowledged by continuing seasonal mobility practices, occupying numerous places throughout the year, and engaging in cultural activities such as gathering birchbark, fishing, and hunting. Passamaquoddy people actively inhabited these homelands throughout the nineteenth century in defiance of colonial attempts to divide them.

The establishment of borders was not the only way non-tribal governments endeavored to reduce Passamaquoddy access to land and water. The state of Maine also disfranchised the Wabanaki through the illegal seizure and sale of their territory. When Maine achieved statehood in 1820, members of the Passamaquoddy Tribe understood that “the laws of Massachusetts and Maine at their separation” granted them “the right to hunt and fish forever” in their traditional lands. The state violated these rights, enumerated in three treaties from 1725, 1727, and 1794 that Maine assumed from Massachusetts under the Act of Separation, throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. In a speech to the Maine State Legislature in 1887, Lewis Mitchell, a Passamaquoddy tribal representative, described how the Legislature unjustly possessed and

166 Treat and Pawling, Wabanaki Homeland and the State of Maine, 9-10.
167 Treat and Pawling, Wabanaki Homeland and the State of Maine, 10.
sold Native-owned land in the Town of Perry by public auction for five hundred dollars because they claimed “the Indians did not need it.”\textsuperscript{170} Mitchell insisted that “the Indians opposed the sale of it. Now their firewood costs the Indians of Pleasant Point $1,500.00 a year.”\textsuperscript{171} Declaring the injustice of this sale, Mitchell called upon members of the Legislature to “consider how many rich men there are in Calais, in St. Stephen, Milltown, Machias, East Machias, Columbia, Cherryfield, and other lumbering towns” in Passamaquoddy territory. “We ask ourselves, how do they make most of their money?” Mitchell demanded. Responding to his own question, he reported: “Answer is, they make it on lumber or timber once owned by the Passamaquoddy Indians.”\textsuperscript{172} He thus revealed the complex interplay between land loss and economic oppression. Without their land base, the Passamaquoddy were “stripped of their whole country, their privileges on which they depend for their living; all the land they claim to own now being only ten acres.”\textsuperscript{173} The state of Maine not only reduced Wabanaki access to their traditional lands, river networks, and coastlines, but also impeded their opportunity for economic growth by placing natural resources into the hands of non-Native private owners.

In his speech, Mitchell also condemned the decision of the courts in the 1874 case \textit{Granger v. Avery}, which violated the treaty of 1794 and established that the Passamaquoddy Tribe did not have original title to land in Maine. The plaintiff, Granger, brought the suit against the Passamaquoddy Tribe for trespass on land he claimed to own. Massachusetts had guaranteed the area in question to the Passamaquoddy Tribe in the 1794 treaty, but the state also deeded it to a non-Native proprietor on January 23, 1793, a year before the treaty. The Passamaquoddy Tribe

\textsuperscript{171} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{173} Ibid.
justified their presence on the land on two bases: under the original title, which they insisted had never been relinquished, and under the 1794 treaty. The legal right of indigenous original title to lands they occupied prior to colonization had been federally established by the Supreme Court.\footnote{See \textit{Mitchel v. United States} (1835) and \textit{Holden v. Joy} (1872). O’Toole and Tureen, “State Power and the Passamaquoddy Tribe: A Gross National Hypocrisy,” 14.}

Nevertheless, the Maine courts refused to acknowledge the Passamaquoddy title on the basis of a prior state case decided in 1870, \textit{Penobscot Tribe of Indians v. Veazie}, which determined the title of the government was superior to that of the Penobscot Tribe. This case “had constructed the concept as a fanciful historical notion rather than a grant or recognition of Indian rights,” a notion that ignored legal precedent.\footnote{Ibid., 14.} In \textit{Granger v. Avery}, the court ruled that the Passamaquoddy had no “title originally” to the land, thereby basing their decision on an illegal conception of colonial superiority.

The decision furthermore stated the 1793 deed could not be nullified by the 1794 treaty, contending the state could not re-convey the lands to the Passamaquoddy. The courts thus decreed that deeds superseded treaties.\footnote{Ibid., 15.} Deeding lands dishonestly and often illegally was a well-established colonial practice throughout the Northeast. By ruling that deeds, which transferred private titles to property, overruled treaties, which were legally binding agreements between nations, the Maine courts undermined Wabanaki sovereignty. Mitchell urged the Legislature to give the Passamaquoddy Tribe assistance, imploring them, “now look at yourselves and see whether I am right or wrong….I don’t mean to insult anybody, but simply tell
you of our wrong.” He thus challenged Maine’s land-based disfranchisement of the Wabanaki through direct petition to the government, and demanded legal redress.

Landowners’ acts of oppression disfranchised the Wabanaki on a more individual basis as well. In 1835, Joseph Stanislaus, a Passamaquoddy political adviser, traveled with a group of fellow Wabanaki men to gather birchbark to make torch lights for herring fishing. They entered property “owned” by Ichabod Chadbourne. These men continued their traditional subsistence practices guaranteed by treaties. The state of Maine guaranteed privileges to hunt and fish forever on the same lands Chadbourne claimed to own, but Chadbourne verbally abused the men, using intimidation to expel them from his “property.” Stanislaus criticized Chadbourne’s notions of land ownership, which included the “possession” of natural resources in Passamaquoddy homelands. “You don’t make the trees; you don’t make the land; the Great Spirit makes the trees and land; Passamaquoddy don’t steal bark,” he asserted. He then criticized the illegal transfer of property into private hands, proclaiming, “Indian land, Indian trees, Indian bark, Indian water. Great while ago the Great Spirit gave this all to Passamaquoddy; white man steal Indian land and everything.” Landowners contributed to the dispossession of Wabanaki people by infringing on their rights to hunt, fish, and gather on land, which the state of Maine had seemingly guaranteed in treaties. Certain Passamaquoddy activists, including Stanislaus and Mitchell, fought these actions through speeches, petitions, and letters. Others, such as Joseph, resisted land-based disfranchisement by continuing to travel and gather natural resources such as

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179 Ibid.
birchbark throughout Passamaquoddy homelands, all the while risking intimidation and legal action.

**The Molocessinut: Continuing Wabanaki Birchbark Basketry**

When Joseph gathered birchbark and ash splints, folded and stitched containers, and etched designs using a crooked tool, he engaged in crafting practices Wabanaki people had honed over generations. The *molocessinut*, or glove box, demonstrates the deep history of Wabanaki birchbark basketry. Joseph created this object for Victorian American visitors to Campobello Island—but like the Anishinaabe creator of the miniature *mokuk* in the collections of the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, Joseph drew from Wabanaki tradition to craft this birchbark object. George Neptune, currently the Passamaquoddy Museum Educator at the Abbe Museum, explored the intersections between these two cultures in his exhibition label for the *molocessinut*. “Prior to the arrival of Europeans, a container this shape and size would have been used to store eagle feathers, which are sacred in Wabanaki culture,” Neptune wrote.¹⁸⁰ The Victorian owner of the *molocessinut* would have stored gloves or other trinkets in the box, but Wabanaki basketry traditionally included items of similar dimensions. When Joseph adapted his containers for Victorian American consumers, he engaged in a process of innovation through birchbark that Wabanaki communities developed over multiple centuries.

Before the tourist market became a source of viable income to the Wabanaki people struggling to make a living after losing land and land-based rights, they adapted birchbark to create objects that served sacred, decorative, and utilitarian purposes. According to oral tradition, Koluscap, the Passamaquoddy culture hero, created the birch tree and told it to take care of the

In addition to birchbark baskets, Wabanaki people have also woven brown ash baskets for generations. Neptune explained,

“Basket making is an important art form for Wabanaki people because of our creation story. In our creation story, Koluscap, the first man, who in many ways was seen as the father of Wabanaki people, came to this land and there were no people here, so he took an arrow from his quiver and he fired it at the brown ash tree. The brown ash tree then split in half, and from the brown ash tree stepped the first Wabanaki man and Wabanaki woman side by side, with other Wabanaki people coming behind them. So, when we make baskets, we are actually making it from the brown ash tree, so we are making and creating these containers from the same material that Koluscap created us from. So in many ways, baskets are almost like our brothers and sisters, or even our children.”

Neptune’s language of kinship presents baskets as familial relations, rather than inanimate objects capable of being “possessed.” His telling of this creation story provides context for the importance of the brown ash tree and the birch tree for the Wabanaki, who gathered and used these trees’ bark and wood. Birchbark was especially versatile. The English colonist John Josselyn, who explored the coast of Maine in 1638 and lived among the Wabanaki from 1663 until 1671, described the creation of decorated birchbark containers in an account published in 1675: “Delicate sweet dishes too they make of Birch-Bark, sowed with threads drawn from Spruse or white Cedar-Roots, and garnished on the out-side with flourisht works, and on the brims with glittering quills taken from the Porcupine, and dyed, some black, others red, the white are natural, these they make of all sizes from a dram cup to a dish containing a pottle, likewise Buckets to carry water or the like, large Boxes too of the same materials.” We should not read Josselyn as an entirely reliable source because he wrote with credulity for an English

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181 Lester, History on Birchbark, 7-8.
audience to convince them to settle in New England; however, he detailed Wabanaki material culture and the flora and fauna of the region with relative accuracy. Josselyn’s observations reflected the diversity of birchbark containers Wabanaki communities created in the seventeenth century. His size analogy compared birchbark containers to typical English domestic items, including a dram cup, which held a small draught, and a dish containing a pottle, which was approximately a half-gallon. Wabanaki birchbark containers varied in dimension and size, and craftspeople adapted these containers for diverse purposes. The *molocessinut* thus belonged to the family of Wabanaki birchbark objects.

The Wabanaki also used birchbark to create canoes, in which they traveled along the vast network of waterways that connected the Native Northeast. Josselyn observed that “their *Cannows* are made of *Birch*, they shape them with flat Ribbs of white *Cedar*, and cover them with large sheets of *Birch-bark*, sowing them through with strong threds *Spruse-Roots* or white *Cedar*, and pitch them with a mixture of *Turpentine* and the hard rosen that is dried with the Air on the outside of the Bark of *Firr-Tree*.” In addition to the spruce and cedar roots used to sew birchbark containers together, canoes required cedar ribs and birch thwart. The Wabanaki also derived from trees a mixture of turpentine and tree resin, applied to the seams to make the boat waterproof. The use of diverse resources to work with birchbark reflected a deep environmental awareness. In these canoes the Wabanaki also journeyed to rich fishing sites, which were

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traditional gathering places. There they collected birchbark to create torches to attract fish, as Stanislaus and the group of Passamaquoddy men were doing when Chadbourne expelled them from his “property.” Attaching these torches to the bows of their canoes, the Wabanaki speared fish from above when they swam towards the light.\textsuperscript{187} Altogether, these diverse uses of birchbark reflected deep environmental awareness. When Joseph gathered birchbark to build canoes, craft containers, create fishing torches, and more, he drew upon this multi-faceted knowledge of his homelands, the natural resources they contained, and technologies necessary for extracting them.

When he harvested the birchbark to create the \textit{molocessinut}, Joseph relied on this environmental knowledge to know when the birch tree naturally stripped its bark. He waited until after the first hard frost, when the bark was easiest to remove. In the winter, the bark was thicker and darker. When he etched his designs, Joseph scraped away the winter layer to reveal the lighter-colored summer layer underneath.\textsuperscript{188} Joseph created the \textit{molocessinut} in the context of the tourist market, but he cut, folded, and etched the birchbark as his ancestors did, scraping “flourisht works” in designs that reflected his cultural heritage. Like many souvenirs, the \textit{molocessinut} was relatively small, compared to the buckets or boxes described by Josselyn. The shape of the item was not new; as Neptune explained, containers resembling the \textit{molocessinut} had traditional uses in Wabanaki culture. Joseph’s craft did not diverge dramatically from the cultural continuum of Wabanaki birchbark work, yet his art was original. Like many of his birchbark objects, the \textit{molocessinut} combined geometric patterns with everyday scenes from traditional life. The object depicted several scenes, including Wabanaki people performing daily

tasks by a *wikuwam* (house), two herons standing next to each other, and Wabanaki people riding in a canoe. With these etchings, he translated Passamaquoddy lifeways to curious non-Native buyers as Nicolar did, but through a Native birchbark container instead of an English-language book.

**The Wikhikoninut: Communicating through Wikhegan**

Communicating through birchbark was not a new phenomenon. The Wabanaki had long used the practice of *wikhegan*, or birchbark writing, to transmit messages, remember songs, and record stories and communal history.\(^{189}\) Joseph invoked this practice through the animals he depicted on the *wikhikoninut*. Nicolar referenced this genre of *wikhegan* during his discussion of the animal, fish or fowl symbols of Wabanaki clans. Clan members’ adoption of these symbols “set them up to writing or making marks, so that they could be understood by those who see them.”\(^{190}\) When Wabanaki people traveled across the waterways and paths that connected their territories and entered “into some new country,” they made marks “on the side of the tree where the bark had been knocked off,” prominently displaying the emblem of their clan alongside contextual images. Nicolar recorded the names of several clans in Penobscot: the “Ar-wa-soose,” or bear, the “Ar-na-tar-so,” or hummingbird, and the “Kar-par-she,” or fish sturgeon.\(^{191}\) Joseph built upon these traditions, etching a dozen animals on the *wikhikoninut*, including his personal symbol: “ko-ko-kas,” an owl.\(^{192}\)

Wabanaki travelers rarely carved clan symbols without context; Nicolar also described the pictures etched on trees that helped viewers understand why the traveler was passing through.

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\(^{190}\) Nicolar, *Life and Traditions of the Red Man*, 199.

\(^{191}\) Ibid.

\(^{192}\) *Coming Home* Gallery Guide, 5.
Picture of a wigwam represents the home of the family; picture of a person facing from it means going from home; facing to it represents going home; picture of the Sun means day; the Moon, Month. When a person writes the number of days of his absence, marks out the sun, and under it puts as many notches as there are days of his absence, and if it be months, uses the moon instead but exactly in the same manner.\textsuperscript{193}

Delineating physical space was also a part of wikhegan; in addition to tree markings, the Wabanaki made birchbark maps, on which they marked “all the rivers and streams of a country of which they wish to make a representation.”\textsuperscript{194} A Jesuit priest who lived at Kespek, located on the extreme northeast coast of Wabanaki homelands, remarked on the success of these maps that “an Indian who possesses one makes long voyages without going astray.”\textsuperscript{195} Joseph included his own contextual information alongside the animal symbols he etched in the form of geometric patterns and words. These provided a guide for non-Native viewers to understand Joseph’s work. He mapped out cultural space, rather than physical space, but like the Wabanaki keepers of birchbark maps, the Victorian owner of the wikhikoninut had access to the information necessary to understand, at least partially, the messages conveyed by the picture frame.

Joseph signed his name in block letters on the wikhikoninut as “Gov. Tomah Joseph” and underneath specified “Passamaquoddy Tribe.” In addition to his signature, Joseph often included phrases in Passamaquoddy on his other birchbark pieces, such as “mikwid hamin,” which translates to “recall me in your mind” or “remember me.”\textsuperscript{196} He thus used birchbark as a material medium to convey his identity and language through the Latin alphabet, which he often used to preserve Passamaquoddy words as well. Because the wikhikoninut contained a picture of him, he

\textsuperscript{193} Nicolar, \textit{Life and Traditions of the Red Man}, 199.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{196} Lester, \textit{History on Birchbark}, 16.
specified elements of his identity to the non-Native owner; he communicated that he was a governor and a member of the Passamaquoddy Tribe. This decision was political. By specifying his leadership position and cultural identity, he asserted to the non-Native owner of the frame that the Passamaquoddy Tribe was, in fact, a legitimate sovereign nation with active leadership. The photograph of Joseph included in the frame shows him dressed in Wabanaki clothing, wearing a headdress and holding a bow and arrow. He is looking away from the photographer. With the contextual words that specified his political role, the photograph presented Joseph as an official figure. Joseph created the *wikhikoninut* in 1895, the same year he sent the letter about the power of one’s will to the Maine state government. He proclaimed Wabanaki political authority to multiple audiences, using diverse forms of communication to ensure his message would reach both citizens and government officials.

Joseph adapted *wikhegan* to include English orthography that his Victorian American audience could read, but he also included pictorials and geometric designs to convey his cultural identity. Jesuit missionaries, who established the first French missions in North America in Maine between 1611 and 1613, observed the adaptation of *wikhegan* as they taught Catholic ideology to the Wabanaki. In 1625, the Jesuit Gabriel Druillettes, who lived among the Wabanaki along the Kennebec River, noted that some of his pupils “would write their lessons after a fashion of their own, using a bit of charcoal for a pen, and a piece of bark instead of paper….They used certain signs corresponding to their ideas; as it were, a local reminder, for recalling points and articles and maxims which they had retained.” While Druillettes understood this writing in relation to his work as a missionary, the Wabanaki who used charcoal

to record their lessons on pieces of birchbark were not imitating English writing, but modifying
wikhegan. Joseph also used signs corresponding to his Passamaquoddy identity to remind his
audience that he was Native. The animal symbols, including his own owl, surrounded his
photograph. They announced to viewers that they could not understand Joseph without his
Wabanaki culture. Geometric designs framed his writing and animal symbols, demarcating the
cultural messages he conveyed through the wikhikoninut and evoking the traditional patterns
used to decorate Wabanaki birchbark containers. While many elements of the wikhikoninut were
specific to Wabanaki traditions, Joseph helped translate these aspects to a non-Native audience
as a means of asserting Passamaquoddy political and cultural legitimacy. The final product was a
birchbark object with layers of information rooted in both Wabanaki and English signifying
systems.

The Tulehpinut: Preserving Passamaquoddy Oral Tradition

In addition to these functions, Joseph also used his birchbark objects to depict
Passamaquoddy oral tradition, employing wikhegan to preserve creation stories for future
generations of Wabanaki people and interested whites. The images on the tulehpinut, crafted in
1902, represented one such story. As his 1895 letter to the Maine state government indicated,
Joseph narrated these stories to state officials and ethnographers. In the late nineteenth century,
there was a movement among ethnographers to gather Native creation stories. In the summer of
1882, folklorist Charles Godfrey Leland began “to collect among the Passamaquoddy Indians at
Campobello, New Brunswick, their traditions and folk-lore.”

He transcribed and compiled these creation stories, which he “gathered directly from Indian narrators,” in his book The

199 Charles Godfrey Leland, The Algonquin Legends of New England, or, Myths and Folk Lore of
the Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot Tribes (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company,
1884), iii.
Algonquin Legends of New England, or, Myths and Folk Lore of the Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot Tribes (1884). Leland interspersed his book with cultural commentary, but included the caveat that “when the Indian shall have passed away there will come far better ethnologists than I am, who will be much more obliged to me for collecting raw material than for cooking it.”

Like many nineteenth-century ethnologists, Leland believed in the inevitable extinction of Native people and their cultures through intermarriage, acculturation, and death. Yet Joseph, Nicolar, Mitchell, and the thousands of other Wabanaki people who narrated creation stories, created baskets, petitioned the government, and continued to travel throughout their homelands gave evidence to the contrary. Leland did credit both “Tomah Josephs, Passamaquoddy, Indian Governor at Peter Dana’s Point, Maine” and “Louis Mitchell, Indian member of the Legislature of Maine” as contributors to Algonquin Legends. Underneath Mitchell’s acknowledgment, he wrote, “To this gentleman I am greatly indebted for manuscripts, letters, and oral narrations of great value.”

Leland’s longstanding relationship with Mitchell and Joseph meant he was aware of contemporary Wabanaki political engagement and disfranchisement. But instead of outlining these historical realities, Leland chose to represent creation stories through a timeless ethnographic lens.

Despite his claim that he provided “raw” stories, Leland rewrote them and provided extensive colonial analysis. For example, Leland included in Algonquin Legends the story that Joseph relayed to the Maine state government ten years later, generalizing that “to every Algonquin a rotten log by the road, covered with moss, suggests the wild legend of the log-demon.”

Joseph, who told this story to illustrate the significance of perseverance in m’téoulin,

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200 Ibid., iv.
201 Ibid., ix.
202 Ibid., 339.
provided a more accurate and complex version in his letter ten years later. Leland included the example of the “log-demon” to demonstrate the “faith in magic” that “the white man talks about without feeling, and which the Indian feels without talking about.” Leland clarified that by “magic” he meant “the poetry of nature, with all its quaint and beautiful superstitions.” 203 He disparaged Wabanaki religion through his analysis of “legends.” Nevertheless, Leland’s compilation helped preserve these creation stories. But it is important to stress that the work of ethnologists was not the most significant body of oral tradition produced in the nineteenth century. Wabanaki people also wrote and illustrated creation stories, preserving their perspectives for future generations. As Nicolar articulated, the “general desire among the people that some one ought to write [the life of the red man] now if ever” motivated Joseph to begin depicting creation stories on his birchbark art. He filtered these stories through *wikhegan*, using pictorials and other symbols to represent Passamaquoddy oral tradition.

Joseph’s illustrations of recurring images from Passamaquoddy creation stories functioned as tools of cultural transmission. One scene that Joseph depicted on the *tulehpinit* represented the story of Koluscap, who was “the first man to come to the Dawnland,” and Pukcinsquehs, “a very powerful and very dark sorceress.” 204 Koluscap is considered a “culture hero” to the Wabanaki people; he was “not the Great Spirit or the Creator, but someone who was sent by the Creator to carry out instructions: a demi-god, of sorts.” 205 In the story, recounted by George Neptune, Pukcinsquehs fell in love with Koluscap, but became angry when he did not

203 Ibid.
return her love. She “began to direct her rage towards Koluscap’s children, the Wabanaki. For many years she tormented Koluscap, eventually kidnapping his family members, Grandmother Woodchuck and Nephew Marten….There followed an epic chase through the Dawnland.” Neptune relayed,

Koluskap and Pukcinsqehs each grew to such size that their footsteps sounded like thunder, and their snowshoes left imprints in the earth and rocks throughout the Dawnland. Eventually, Koluskap caught up to Pukcinsqehs on the island of Pesamkuk. In the middle of a range of mountains, Pemotonet, Koluskap caught Pukcinsqehs by her hair and threw her to the ground. As Koluskap held her by the hair, Pukcinsqehs began to laugh, only further maddening Koluskap. Growing himself to his largest size, he began to stomp Pukcinsqehs into the ground. As he stomped, Pukcinsqehs laughed louder and louder, only adding to his rage. When Koluskap finally calmed himself enough to remove his foot, he looked down in horror at what he had done. By stomping on the witch, he had helped her change from a singular being into millions of tiny, biting insects: the first mosquitoes and black flies.

Neptune adapted his version of this story from the oral histories heard as a child in Indian Township and Leland’s book. According to the version of this story in Algonquin Legends, which Leland likely recorded from Joseph or one of his contemporaries, “Pook-jin-skwess was a witch who could take on the form of either a man or a woman and in the time this story took place Pook-jin-skwess looked to be a man.” On the tulehpinut, Joseph etched two men carrying hatchets, capturing another man by his hair. He thus depicted the conclusion of the story of Koluscap and Pukcinsqehs through wikhegan.

While the Victorian owner of the tulehpinut may not have had the extensive knowledge of Wabanaki oral tradition to fully understand the story depicted by Joseph, he included the pictorials as means of illustrating his cultural world. Non-Native people could understand Joseph’s illustrations if they had read Leland’s Algonquin Legends or Nicolar’s Life and

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Traditions of the Red Man, or if they had listened to Passamaquoddy people narrate oral tradition in performances on Campobello Island. Furthermore, Joseph also considered future generations of Wabanaki people, such as his son, who could read his birchbark images to remember creation stories. As Joseph engaged in the dissemination of Passamaquoddy knowledge, he intended to communicate and preserve Wabanaki traditions as Leland, Nicolar, and Mitchell did. His choice to use adaptations of *wikhegan* on souvenir birchbark objects that he sold to non-Native visitors ensured a wider circulation of his cultural and political messages. Furthermore, he memorialized his culture by adapting Wabanaki birchbark basketry and writing, thus preserving these traditional practices as well. By entrusting his birchbark items to outsiders with the resources to conserve them, he arguably indirectly handed his birchbark items down to future generations of Passamaquoddy people.

**Coming Home: Decolonizing Wabanaki Material Culture**

Many of Joseph’s birchbark objects are currently held in the collections of museums throughout the Northeast, including the Boston Children’s Museum in Boston, Massachusetts, the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, the Campobello Public Library and Museum in Welshpool, New Brunswick, and the Abbe Museum in Bar Harbor, Maine. Others are in private collections of families who purchased or received birchbark items from Joseph. In the 2015 major temporary exhibit *Coming Home*, Abbe curators worked with tribal members to bring Wabanaki material culture “home” from museums far away from Wabanaki homelands through the process of loaning. *Coming Home* was “an invitation to Wabanaki people to re-connect with familiar and unfamiliar material culture.”\(^{207}\) The exhibit invited eight Wabanaki community curators from the Passamaquoddy, Micmac, Maliseet, and Penobscot Nations to

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select objects and write labels. The Passamaquoddy community curators included Natalie and Cassandra Dana (descendants of Joseph), Stephanie A. Francis, and Abbe museum educator George Neptune. The exhibit included Joseph’s molocessinut, wikhikoninut, and tulehpinit as well as three other objects: an oqitoney qotoput, or canoe chair, from the Boston Children’s Museum; a sukahewotikoninut, or waste basket, from the Peabody Essex Museum, and a wikhikoninut from the Boston Children’s Museum.

As with the Wampanoag burl bowl presently held at the Massachusetts Historical Society, Wabanaki objects at museums throughout the Northeast are still highly inaccessible to indigenous communities. Jennifer Pictou, the Micmac coordinator of the community curator process, explained the importance of community engagement with Wabanaki objects at the Abbe:

It was a humbling experience to present someone with images of quillwork, beading, or carving that hadn’t been seen outside a museum in many years. It was even more humbling to see the faces of the curators and community members as they remembered people and events connected to the objects or similar items. It reinforced a deep connection to the past in such a way that it became the present tense in our conversations. These objects are not dead things but resting examples of living, vibrant cultures that continue to thrive in Maine. They serve us all as reminders of people, choices, heritage, and tradition.208

As Pictou emphasized, the opportunity for Native people to engage with historic Wabanaki objects was a transformative experience. The notion that historic objects “are not dead things” provides a new lens through which to examine Wabanaki material culture, which museums and curators have often chosen to represent through historic sources. As “resting examples of living, vibrant cultures,” historic Wabanaki objects have multiple purposes beyond traditional museum...
displays. In *Coming Home*, the Abbe Museum chose to decolonize these objects by enabling contemporary Native people to interact directly with them, thereby beginning to reverse the processes of colonialism that have long separated Wabanaki objects from their communities.

Joseph sold his objects to non-Native buyers because land-based disfranchisement made traditional subsistence practices insufficient to support his family and other relations. His objects preserved Passamaquoddy traditions, including birchbark basketry, *wikhegan*, and creation stories. When museums make Joseph’s objects available to Wabanaki communities in new ways, Native people can re-engage with these traditions and pass them on to future generations. Francis explained in her label for the *tulehpinut* that she “chose this birch bark, spruce root case because I am interested in the stories/legends depicted in Tomah Joseph’s etchings.”²⁰⁹ She and other Passamaquoddy people can study and learn these stories from Joseph’s *wikhegan*. In addition to exploring the creation stories that Joseph depicted, Wabanaki communities can also examine his birchbark items to learn how he crafted each object. This process contributes to the reclamation of Native crafting techniques currently taking place in Wabanaki communities. Finally, Wabanaki people can use Joseph’s objects to explore nineteenth-century indigenous history. Joseph’s birchbark art provides evidence of Wabanaki presence, persistence, and political engagement in Maine.

While *Coming Home* provided Wabanaki communities with the opportunity to briefly engage with Joseph’s objects, temporary loans are not the most effective solution. As the exhibit text explained, the separation of Wabanaki objects from their communities over both time and space has caused gaps in cultural knowledge and memory.²¹⁰ From a decolonizing perspective,

museums that hold Joseph’s objects are responsible for making Joseph’s objects accessible to Wabanaki communities. These museums should consider loaning them on a long-term or permanent basis to two Passamaquoddy tribal museums, the Waponahki Museum & Resource Center in the Sipayik (Pleasant Point) Reservation and the Passamaquoddy Tribal Museum in the Motahkomikuk (Indian Township) Reservation. There, Passamaquoddy tribal members could readily access and engage with Joseph’s objects, restoring gaps in knowledge and ensuring the transmission of cultural heritage to future generations.
This *molocessinut* (glove box), ca. 1890-1930, depicts several scenes, including Wabanaki people performing daily tasks by a *wikuwam* (house), two herons standing next to each other, and Wabanaki people riding in a canoe.

Image courtesy of the Boston Children's Museum and Abbe Museum.
This *tulehpinit* (playing card box), 1902, depicts geometric patterns, an encampment scene, and two men carrying hatchets, capturing another man by his hair. The hair-pulling scene possibly represented the story of Koluscap and Pukcinsquehs. Image courtesy of the Boston Children's Museum and Abbe Museum.
This *wikhikoninut* (picture frame), ca. 1895, depicts geometric patterns, animal symbols, and the phrase “Gov. Tomah Joseph, Passamaquoddy Tribe.” These three elements illustrate the indigenous practice of *wikhegan*, or birchbark writing.

Image courtesy of the Peabody Essex Museum and Abbe Museum.
Figure 3.4

Map showing Passamaquoddy homelands and the St. Croix River border. Peter Dana Point is located in the Passamaquoddy Indian Township Reservation. Campobello Island is pictured in Passamaquoddy Bay.
Conclusion

Wampanoag, Anishinaabe, and Wabanaki communities survived, persisting as Native peoples into the twenty-first century. They survived despite colonial efforts to remove them, both from the land and from history. Yet the stories of indigenous people in the Northeast are about more than just survival. The Native craftspeople who created the objects examined by this project were activists, artists, traders, writers, and orators. They left an imprint on the past through their material culture, and their lives were intertwined with the sociopolitical events of the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. Chickens Warrups, Andrew Blackbird, Tomah Joseph, and Joseph Nicolar each produced unique bodies of work that responded to their circumstances. The unknown Native creators of wooden bowls, boxes, and shoes in probate inventories and the unnamed Anishinaabe artists who created souvenirs such as the miniature mokuk were also actors in history. Studying these objects alongside documentary records, ethnographic sources, and oral traditions helps us uncover these stories of resilience and resistance, as Native communities navigated colonial presence and asserted their permanent place in the Northeast.

My study has attempted to expand conventional ways of understanding historical and ongoing indigenous presence. Each chapter presented specific Native histories by analyzing objects that provide evidence of not only indigenous materiality, but also the active repudiation of colonial domination. As historic sources, Native objects help illuminate multifaceted Native stories of survivance. Joseph not only created birchbark art, but also served as tribal governor, wrote letters to the Maine state government and narrated oral traditions. His objects reflected and informed these interactions. Likewise, Warrups crafted baskets, wooden bowls, and brooms to exchange for food and material goods, but he also led an amalgamated Pequannock and
Paugussett community and transacted with Connecticut and New York state governments to exchange lands in response to encroachment. These practices show the various ways indigenous people wielded materiality within the broad scheme of negotiating with colonial forces.

The use of material culture as historic evidence provides new insights into indigenous histories. As Linda Coombs has argued, objects are “windows into the lives of people.” These peoples’ stories have healing potential for Native communities that continue to experience the impacts of colonialism, an ongoing process. In *Decolonizing Museums*, Amy Lonetree identifies one of her most important goals: “to assist communities in their efforts to address the legacies of historic unresolved grief by speaking the hard truths of colonialism and thereby creating spaces for healing and understanding.” Historic unresolved grief is “the impaired or delayed mourning” that occurs as a result of the many traumas that indigenous people have suffered. By “speaking the hard truths of colonialism,” Lonetree argues, communities can acknowledge “the painful aspects of our history along with our stories of survivance, so that we can move toward healing, well-being, and true self-determination.” Indigenous communities can create these spaces for healing and understanding in tribal museums or cultural centers, among other places.

Colonial institutions have collected each of the extant objects discussed in this project, thereby restricting community access to indigenous material culture. I have emphasized the importance of making these objects accessible to Native communities, as well as enabling

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213 Ibid.
214 Ibid., 6.
indigenous people to tell their own stories. When museums return Native objects, communities can draw from these stories to create places of healing while reversing the processes of colonialism that separated them from their material culture. Lakota scholar and social worker Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart and her colleague Lemyra DeBruyn explain that “The connectedness of the past to present to future remains a circle of lessons and insights that can give us both the consciousness and the conscience to heal ourselves. Understanding the interrelationship with our past and how it shapes our present world will also give us the courage to initiate healing.”  

Indigenous material culture represents a direct link to the past, aiding Native communities in connecting lessons and insights from history to the present and future. Historians can also contribute to these decolonizing practices by consulting indigenous objects as sources. Neglecting to do so ignores a vast body of work produced by Native people. These indigenous histories should include the context of colonialism, for as Lonetree argues, “Telling the full story of the Native American holocaust proves a testament not to Native victimhood but to Native skill, adaptability, courage, tenacity, and countless other qualities that made our survival a reality against all odds.”

Without Native objects, historians overlook many of the ways communities employed these countless qualities to persist. Indigenous material culture embodies survivance. When museums and historians represent Native objects through this lens, they can move towards decolonization.

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215 Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart and Lemyra M. DeBruyn, “The American Indian Holocaust: Healing from Historical Trauma and Historic Unresolved Grief among the Lakota; A Dissertation Based upon an Independent Investigation” (Ph.D. dissertation, Smith College, 1995), 72, in Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums*, 5-6.

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