

## The Art of Community

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### Résumé de l'article

La nation huronne-wendat de Wendake (Lorette, Québec) a maintenu sa culture et son identité pendant des siècles, souvent en dépit de, et en résistance contre les pressions occasionnées par la présence missionnaire et les politiques coloniales. Cette survivance est tributaire de savoirs, de valeurs et de coutumes transmis de génération en génération. Cet article explore l'art de la communauté wendat et ses éléments constitutifs : la fabrication d'objets, la tradition orale, l'engagement actif des membres de la collectivité dans les pratiques traditionnelles, ainsi que l'adaptation des pratiques ancestrales aux préoccupations actuelles. Il montre comment la production artistique wendat, dans sa force expressive, contribue à la continuité et cohésion sociale de la nation wendat.

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La nation huronne-wendat de Wendake (Lorette, Québec) a maintenu sa culture et son identité pendant des siècles, souvent en dépit de, et en résistance contre les pressions occasionnées par la présence missionnaire et les politiques coloniales. Cette survivance est tributaire de savoirs, de valeurs et de coutumes transmis de génération en génération. Cet article explore l'art de la communauté wendat et ses éléments constitutifs : la fabrication d'objets, la tradition orale, l'engagement actif des membres de la collectivité dans les pratiques traditionnelles, ainsi que l'adaptation des pratiques ancestrales aux préoccupations actuelles. Il montre comment la production artistique wendat, dans sa force expressive, contribue à la continuité et cohésion sociale de la nation wendat.

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*“Si tu ne connais pas tes racines, tu ne sais pas qui tu es.”*<sup>1</sup> With these words, Wendat storyteller Yolande Okia Picard explains the importance of learning, teaching, and passing on the cultural knowledge of her community. The Wendat First Nation of Wendake (Lorette, Quebec) has maintained its culture and a strong sense of national identity over the centuries through its values and customs, whose importance Mme. Picard so eloquently expresses.<sup>2</sup> Wendake is located eight kilometres from Quebec City, and has been encircled by Canadian farms and towns since the mid-eighteenth century. Wendat cultural continuity was maintained, often in the face of assimilationist pressures from missionary presence and colonial government policies.<sup>3</sup> As Chief Jean Sioui, Family Chief of the Huron-Wendat Band Council, explains, *“Pendant des siècles, nous avons eu à lutter pour notre survie. Pour nos propres vies et pour la survie de notre culture. C’est le rappel d’une résistance incroyable, d’une force de survie rarement égalée dont nous sommes les héritiers.”*<sup>4</sup>

The “resistance” of which Chief Jean Sioui speaks, as well as the survival of Wendat culture and identity, was and continues to be supported by the transmission of traditional knowledge to successive generations through the dynamic, participative nature of ancestral customs. This is the art of community—the connected practices that frame ceremony, the visual arts, and the social structure of clan and family, thus renewing and sustaining the cohesiveness of the nation with their every iteration. Through this collective strength, the Wendat have maintained and passed on the value of “knowing who you are” expressed by Yolande Okia Picard as an essential component of identity and self-knowledge.

This article explores the Wendat art of community and how its constitutive elements were carried forward over generations through the oral tradition and active engagement with traditional practices, thus maintaining national identity and unity. Wendat visual arts were one of these constitutive elements, and I will discuss specific artworks, their materials and techniques, as a means of explaining their role in the art of community.<sup>5</sup>

Wendat community events were rich and varied and included clan and family celebrations, such as the presentation of a name to a young person, as well as diplomatic occasions, such as the investiture of a Wendat chief or a chiefs’ visit to foreign leaders. Visual arts, such as the moosehair embroidery of ceremonial dress or gifts and wampum made to memorialize specific diplomatic meetings, were central to these events.<sup>6</sup> The power of artistic production “to develop and express collective identity” contributed to Wendat group

1. Yolande Okia Picard, “L’école de la culture,” *Le Soleil*, July 26, 2011, [www.lapresse.ca/le-soleil/dossiers/wendake-grandir-sans-trahir-le-passe/201107/25/01-4420900-lecole-de-la-culture.php](http://www.lapresse.ca/le-soleil/dossiers/wendake-grandir-sans-trahir-le-passe/201107/25/01-4420900-lecole-de-la-culture.php).

2. Chief Jean Sioui, “Mot de chef familial à la culture,” *Wendat endi’ Nous, les Wendat: Politique culturelle de la nation huronne-wendat* (Wendake, QC: Conseil de la Nation huronne-wendat, 2015).

3. Jonathan Lainey and Thomas Peace, “Louis Sawantamen: A Life Forged by Warfare and Migration,” in *Aboriginal History: A Reader*, eds. Kristin Burnett and Geoff Read (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 108.

4. Chief Jean Sioui, "Mot de chef familial à la culture."

5. There is evidence in certain studies that material culture is not necessarily an indication of communal unity. See, for example, Susan Leigh Starr and James R. Griesemer, "Institutional Ecology, 'Translations' and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907–39," *Social Studies of Science* 19, 3 (August 1989): 387–429. However, my research into Wendat visual arts and material culture demonstrates just the opposite. In the Wendat First Nation community, material culture includes practices of sourcing and preparing materials, visual-arts techniques and their transmission, and the teaching of Wendat cultural meanings contained in embroidered motifs; it was and is a source of Wendat community cohesion and sense of belonging.

6. Wampum are made of purple and white shells in single strings or woven into widths. Worked with motifs supporting the content of an agreement or speech, wampum played a central role in diplomacy, acting as a public record of a contract or agreement. It could be part of a gift exchange or returned to the community as collective property to be kept as a historical archive that could be periodically retold. Together with the oral tradition, wampum transmitted cultural knowledge and national history from generation to generation. See Jonathan Lainey, *La "Monnaie des Sauvages": Les colliers de wampum d'hier à aujourd'hui* (Sillery, QC: Les Éditions du Septentrion, 2004).

7. Seana S. Lowe, "The Art of Community Transformation," *Education and Urban Society* 33, 4 (August 2001): 457.

8. Antoine Bastien, Lorette 1911, 8-G-13.1, Marius Barbeau Fonds, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, QC.

9. Angela Cavender Wilson, "Power of the Spoken Word?," in *Rethinking American Indian History*, ed. Donald Lee Fixico (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 103, 104.

10. Quoted by Marguerite Vincent Tehariolina in *La Nation huronne* (Québec: Éditions Pélican, 1984), 73.

11. Georges E. Sioui, *Huron-Wendat: The Heritage of the Circle* (1st ed. 1994; Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), 114.

12. Ibid.

continuity and cohesion.<sup>7</sup> At the heart of Wendat customs was the *sagamité* feast, an event that brought together community, ceremony, protocol, dances, visual arts, songs, and games, and which required the participation of young and old alike.<sup>8</sup> The *sagamité* itself was a rich stew made in a large copper cauldron shared by all the community and their guests. Today, traditional visual arts continue in Wendake in the moosehair embroidery of a number of artists, including the five Gros-Louis sisters—Hélène, Fernande, Monique, Christiane, and Françoise—and the wampum of Teharihulen Michel Savard. Contemporary arts practices, such as the performance art of Teharihulen Michel Savard, the installation of Sylvie Paré, and the mural by Manon Sioui and Francine Picard, reflect a commitment to community traditions informed by the Wendat nation's interests and values.

This article draws on the words of Wendat leaders, elders, and artists from the early nineteenth century to the present. It is thus grounded in the community's understanding of its own customs and arts practices. I draw on the Wendat oral tradition as it is practiced by community historians, whose words are today, as they were in the past, carriers of history, language, ceremonies, and customs.<sup>9</sup> In 1825, Chief Gabriel Vincent and the council of Chiefs wrote, "*Nous sommes hurons de nation... Nous sommes les héritiers de nos pères, nos pères de leurs pères.*"<sup>10</sup> This same inherent sense of national identity and belief in intergenerational connectedness is evident in Georges E. Sioui's book *Huron-Wendat: Heritage of the Circle* (1994), in which he states, "For Wendats, the first social principle is recognition of the Great Sacred Circle of Life—the Circle of relationships."<sup>11</sup> He adds that, according to this principle, "every human group must be seen as a circle of equal and interdependent persons, united by a system of relationships."<sup>12</sup> The art of community—a complex of visual arts, social practices, and ceremonies—structures Wendat systems of relationship in clan, nation, and international spheres in ways that were and are integral to the future preservation of national identity.

### The Art of Community: Past, Present, and Future

Wendat traditional ceremonies, moosehair embroidery, and wampum production are iterations of ancestral ways transmitted over the centuries. In 1825, when Grand Chief Nicolas Vincent Tsawenhohi met with King George IV in England, he wore embroidered moccasins and leggings as part of his ceremonial dress. For the Wendat, the wampum he held as he spoke to the King was a record of their meeting. | **fig. 1** | Seventeen years later, in 1842, Grand Chief Nicolas Vincent Tsawenhohi made a speech at a formal reception for a gathering of British dignitaries and Quebec leaders held at Chateau St. Louis. As the head of a Wendat delegation of over seventy men and women, each wearing special-occasion dress, he stated that the Wendat "still maintained the customs of their ancestors, which they prized more than anything on earth."<sup>13</sup> In 1869, on the occasion of the ceremonial adoption of three honorary chiefs, Grand Chief François-Xavier Picard Tahourenché said that the Huron<sup>14</sup> would maintain their national identity as long as they lived together as a community.<sup>15</sup>

Wendat traditions continued into the twentieth century. In 1905, the chiefs and community welcomed Swedish Consul General, Folke Cronholm, as

**Figure 1. Edward Chatfield,  
Nicolas Vincent Tsawenhohi,  
1825.** Collection of the McCord  
Museum M20855, gift of Mrs. Walter  
M. Stewart.





an honorary chief with the traditional ceremony and gifts. In 1911, Wendat elders demonstrated their role as keepers of the oral tradition to Marius Barbeau. They recounted the names of moosehair embroidery artists of note and described details of customs celebrated by Grand Chiefs Tahourenché and Tsawenhohi that drew the community together, sustaining its sense of cohesiveness and belonging. In 1959, Madame Edgar Gros Louis, Chief Anthianonk (she who looks after the well), displayed with pride her moosehair embroidery and beadwork, while her husband, Chief Gros Louis, spoke of the importance of Wendat history and stories to the next generation of young people.<sup>16</sup> Successive generations sustained Wendat customs and knowledge, carrying forward Grand Chief Nicolas Vincent Tsawenhohi's words and the value he placed on ancestral customs.

The art of community continues today “*en s’adaptant aux éléments de modernité*” and using twenty-first-century technologies, practices, and media as forms of communication and visual-art production.<sup>17</sup> As Chief Jean Sioui states in the *Politique culturelle de la Nation huronne-wendat*, the Wendat culture “*sait évoluer tout en gardant l’essentiel*.”<sup>18</sup> The knowledge of roots and origins described by Yolande Okia Picard is sustained through the oral tradition, which culture keepers—storytellers, writers, curators, archivists, artists, and scholars—practice in both traditional forms and modern adaptations.

### A Wendat Art History

The community context presented above provides a framework for the following consideration of the nature of a Wendat art history, and specifically moosehair embroidery's place within it. Wendat embroidery artists are central to Wendat art history. Honoured in their community, their work is highly valued as an integral element of the Wendat art of community. This is distinct from traditional, Western art-historical approaches, in which embroidery was marginalized on the basis of gender and aesthetic hierarchies. While European embroidery shares some of the concerns of the Wendat tradition, the latter was doubly marginalized.<sup>19</sup> Until recent decades, Wendat embroidery, like other traditional Indigenous creative production, was collected and displayed in museums, far away from its original context and community meanings. Western fine-arts hierarchies further diminished its value by framing it as a souvenir or artefact to be interpreted according to notions of authenticity and hybridity.<sup>20</sup>

In contrast to Western definitions, a Wendat art history values women embroiderers' technical expertise and virtuoso use of traditional materials and methods as essential to the production of well-made objects. The Wendat recognized the work of outstanding artists. For example, in 1911, Aline Bastien remembered the work of nineteenth-century embroidery artist Scholastique Picard as “the most skilled [embroidery] of her time,” while Antoine Bastien recounted that “the finest embroidery” was chosen as diplomatic gifts presented to visiting dignitaries.<sup>21</sup> Wendat art differs from Western fine-art approaches in another way: moosehair embroidery is valued as a process-oriented art form taught through experiential learning. It also supports intergenerational connectedness, as aunts, mothers, and grandmothers teach girls and young women, thus passing on their knowledge through showing and

13. “Indian Celebration of the Birth of a Prince,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 21, 1842.

14. Huron was the name given to the Wendat by the French in the early contact period. While Wendat is the term the Wendat use to refer to themselves, in some contemporary contexts they also use the term Huron-Wendat.

15. “Chefs Hurons. Odilon-roasti-Odasio-Ahatsistari,” *La presse*, August 1, 1885, vol. 1, no. 235.

16. Marthe B. Hogue, “Madame Anthianonk,” *La terre et le foyer*, November 1958, 9–10.

17. Chief Jean Sioui, “Mot de chef familial à la culture.”

18. *Ibid.*

19. Both men and women produced mediaeval embroidery and it was highly valued. In some European traditions, it also part of the intergenerational transfer of knowledge. Over time, however, it came to be viewed as a “feminine” art form in Western culture. As scholars of Western embroidery have discussed, this and the narrow definition of fine-art media were barriers to inclusion. See Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch* (London: Women's Press, 1984); and *Embroidered Stories: Interpreting Women's Domestic Needlework from the Italian Diaspora*, eds. Edvige Giunta and Joseph Sciorra (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2014).

20. Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700–1900* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 40–50.

21. Aline Bastien, Lorette 1911, Box 51 B-G-13. 20 (1); Antoine Bastien, Lorette 1911, Box 51, B-G-13.1, Marius Barbeau Fonds, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, QC.

telling.<sup>22</sup> As a dynamic set of interactive processes grounded in community relationships and knowledge, moosehair embroidery, from the perspective of a Wendat art history, is also valued as an embodiment of these connections. Embroidered gifts, such as moccasins, headdresses, leggings, or coats, marked the name-giving ceremony, an important moment in the life of an individual that affirmed their belonging in their family and nation.<sup>23</sup> The strong European and Euro-Canadian interest in moosehair-embroidered souvenir wares, a trade that contributed to the financial well-being of the community starting in the eighteenth century, developed out of visitors' admiration for Wendat visual-arts practices embedded in these community values and skills.

A Wendat art history has holistic qualities. It involves, for example, the recognition of specialized skills and connections to the land through moose hunting and the preparation of raw materials—knowledge that is itself part of the art of community. Embroidery begins with materials that embody Wendat connections to ancestral territories, known to the Wendat as the Nionwentsio. Indeed, embroidery required many forms of land-based knowledge, such as men's hunting expertise and knowledge of the geography of their territories, or women's knowledge of and skill with botany, which allowed them to create striking, plant-based dyes. The tanning and smoking process, usually part of men's contribution to the artwork, gave Wendat moccasins, pouches, and leggings their characteristic velvety texture and waterproof qualities.<sup>24</sup>

Moosehair embroidery is a tangible expression of community-based knowledge, collaboration between family members, and connections to the land. As such, gifts and souvenir wares represent Wendat values and world-views, and thus have agency as cultural intermediaries.<sup>25</sup> Within the community—as a component of ceremonial dress and traditional dances and songs—embroidery is an essential element of a complex of performance and creative knowledge. These participative customs are constitutive of a sense of community cohesion, and the Wendat regard the art form as a pillar of their identity.<sup>26</sup> The present article aims to bring us closer to understanding the meanings of Wendat visual arts and art history, and the nature of community grounded in customs that affirm interdependence and inclusion, while also connecting each generation to the past and the future.

### The Wendat of Wendake, Quebec

The story of the Wendat of Wendake situates the art of community in the temporal depth of national traditions. The Wendat are descendants of the Wendat confederacy of eastern Lake Huron, on Georgian Bay. Members of this confederacy relocated to the St. Lawrence Valley in the 1650s and 1660s, an area to which they had strong connections before the arrival of the French.<sup>27</sup> There, the Wendat developed the commercial side of their economy. In Great Lakes tradition, trade and alliance were integrated practices, and diplomatic engagement involved regular meetings between leaders, as well as the exchange of gifts. The Wendat were well known for their skills as traders and negotiators, and through these customs they developed and maintained their networks of Indigenous and non-Indigenous trade partners.<sup>28</sup> The French soldiers who came to the Great Lakes region in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were ill equipped for harsh North-Eastern winters, and by

22. Hélène Gros-Louis, "A Family Affair," in *Quilt of Belonging: The Invitation Project*, ed. Esther Bryan (Erin, ON: Boston Mills Press, 2005), 221; Michelle Hogue and Cheryl Bartlett, "Two-Eyed Seeing: Creating a New Liminal Space in Education," in *Education Canada* (June 19, 2014), [www.edcan.ca/articles/two-eyed-seeing/](http://www.edcan.ca/articles/two-eyed-seeing/); Deborah Doxtator, "Basket Bead and Quill, and the Making of 'Traditional' Art," in *Basket, Bead and Quill*, exh. cat., Thunder Bay Art Gallery (Thunder Bay, ON: TBAG, 1996), 15–17.

23. Mme Marie Robigaud, *Lorette 1911*, Box 51, B-G-206.13 (1), Marius Barbeau Fonds, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, QC.

24. Hogue, "Madame Anthianonk," 10.

25. Hélène Gros-Louis, "A Family Affair," 221.

26. Linda Sioui, *La réaffirmation de l'identité wendat/wyandotte à l'heure de la mondialisation* (Wendake, QC: Éditions Hannenorak, 2012), 51.

27. Lainey and Peace, "Louis Sawantanen," 107.

28. *Ibid.*, 110.

**Figure 2.** Wall pocket, c. 1838, moosefoot, hide, moosehair, beads. Canadian Museum of History, Drummond Collection III-H-466.



the mid-eighteenth century the Wendat were supplying transport equipment to the military.<sup>29</sup> By the late eighteenth century, women's expertise in porcupine quillwork and moosehair embroidery had developed into a market for souvenir wares.<sup>30</sup>

At the time of the British takeover of Quebec, through the Wendat-British Treaty of 1760, Wendat leaders negotiated "*un traité d'alliance, de paix et de protection mutuelle*," assuring Wendat access to commercial markets in Lower Canada.<sup>31</sup> Their military contracts expanded and, as growing numbers of European visitors arrived in their territories, the souvenir trade flourished. Wendat artists adapted their creative production to this particular market and made a variety of practical objects, such as this wall pocket used to hold visitors' calling cards.<sup>32</sup> | **fig. 2** | As domestic accessories and souvenirs, they often appealed to the British soldiers stationed there through the inclusion of moose feet, which represented the Quebec region and the hunt, a popular pastime among the military, while the refined art of moosehair embroidery appealed to British women's interest in needlework. For European buyers, such objects were also emblematic of the Wendat—close allies, yet distinct in their language, way of life, and dress. In yet another layer, the commercial arts bore significant meanings for their Wendat creators. As Ruth B. Phillips argues in *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900* (1998), souvenir wares contain meanings "in the same way that other art forms do."<sup>33</sup> Commercial moosehair embroidery was thus a cultural intermediary, active within the art of community as a means of maintaining and transmitting cultural knowledge, while also extending knowledge of the Wendat nation far beyond the borders of Wendake and its territories.

To European visitors, embroidered mementos were precious collectibles to be given to patrons or friends upon return home. In 1855, officer Captain de Belvèze acquired a moosehair-embroidered box worked with beaver, maple branch, rose, and floral motifs characteristic of Wendat embroidery on birch bark of this period. Described as "a masterpiece of its kind," it was part of a gift presented to the Empress Eugénie of France.<sup>34</sup> In Wendat diplomatic

29. "Dépenses générales," MG1-C11A (archives des colonies, correspondance générale, Canada), vol. 117, 1747, folio 95-116, reel F-118, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, ON.

30. Bénigne-Charles Fevret de Saint-Mesmin, *Journal de notre navigation partant du port du Falmout, Angleterre à ... Halifax, Nouvelle-Écosse juin-octobre 1793*, Edward E. Ayer Fonds, Newberry Library, Chicago, IL.

31. Vision du Patrimoine, Wendake, QC: Conseil de la Nation huronne-wendat, 2016, 5; Lainey and Peace, "Louis Sawantaneen," 111.

32. Judy Hall, "Caldwell and Drummond: First Nations Collections by British Military Personnel in North-Eastern North America" (paper presented at the 28th American Indian Workshop, Musée du quai Branly, Paris, May 10, 2007).

33. Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 20.

34. Joan M. Schwartz, "Un beau souvenir du Canada," in *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images*, eds. Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart (London and New York: Routledge, 2004) 20.



**Figure 3.** Caroline Gros-Louis, Chief's ceremonial dress, 1905, coat, 112 × 40–49 cm. Etnografiska Museet, Folke Cronholm Collection 1936.22.0015, A-F.



**Figure 4.** Pouch, eastern Great Lakes, pre-1725, vegetable fibre, moosehair, porcupine quill, 12.5 × 10.75 cm. Trustees of the British Museum, Sir Hans Sloane Collection M SL 203.



**Figure 5.** Lady Elgin's wall plaque, Wendat, 1847–1854, bark, moosehair, cotton thread, 31 × 39 cm. Canadian Museum of Civilization, Elgin Collection 2008.118.9.



protocols, moosehair-embroidered ceremonial gifts, such as the chief's dress presented to Swedish Consul General Folke Cronhom in 1905, affirmed Wendat culture and regional presence. | **fig. 3** | Through commercial and diplomatic works, the Wendat adapted their visual arts to economic and political change. Creative production supported the nation economically and politically, and passed on traditional knowledge, skills, symbolic meanings, and ceremonies that maintained a distinct Wendat identity. This was the art of community, integral to all aspects of Wendat life.

#### Moosehair Embroidery: Emissary of Wendat Cultural Identity

Records pointing to the use of finely worked gifts as cultural mediators date from the earliest days of contact. In 1608, French leader Samuel de Champlain, an ally of the Wendat, received a woven belt, worked with quill or possibly moosehair; he remarked on the artistry of the woman who made it, as well as and the brilliant reds of the intricate work typical of the region.<sup>35</sup> A Wendat pouch, in which the hourglass thunderbird symbol of the sky spirits are twined in moosehair, provides a good example of this work. The once-vivid red, black, and white motifs are now faded, but the exact evenness of the twining shows the artist's mastery of her materials, while the dynamic forms and balanced asymmetry demonstrate a strong aesthetic sense and technical virtuosity. | **fig. 4** |

In the mid- to late eighteenth century, moosehair embroidery emerged as a symbol of Wendat artistry. Moosehair is a difficult medium and the embroidery techniques are demanding. It requires a large investment of time and must be learned by watching an accomplished artist and then practicing the intricate stitches.<sup>36</sup> Wendake was the main centre for moosehair embroidery, and generations of women mastered the art form there. The strong international market for embroidered commercial wares, together with Wendat diplomatic customs in which embroidered gifts were presented to foreign leaders and dignitaries, allowed the Wendat to assert their presence in the region and achieve recognition beyond the small population of the community (approximately 160 in 1825 and 300 in 1879.)<sup>37</sup>

#### Community-Based Diplomacy

The Wendat maintained their custom of meeting with foreign leaders, both Indigenous and European, at events that established and renewed agreements of peace and trade.<sup>38</sup> The art of community was evident on these occasions in carefully observed protocols, collective Wendat participation, and the moosehair embroidery and wampum that were its symbolic components. A portrait of Grand Chief Nicolas Vincent Tsawenhohi displaying the wampum that memorialized his formal visit to George IV of England in 1825 illustrates this. He is attired in a British military greatcoat, which he received as a gift, and moosehair-embroidered leggings and moccasins. | **fig. 1** | The wampum embodied the Grand Chief's spoken words, and it returned to the community with him as collective property. A culture keeper remembered the history of each wampum, as well as the words it contained, and they displayed it and retold its history at community gatherings. In this way, wampum acted as an archive of the nation's public memory, transmitting its values and founding

35. Samuel de Champlain, *The Works of Samuel de Champlain*, vol. 2 (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1929) 115; vol. 3, 133–134.

36. Hélène Gros-Louis, "A Family Affair," 221.

37. François-Xavier Vaillancourt, Public Notary, Census, 1825, Huron-Wendat Band Council Archives; Denys Delâge "La tradition de commerce chez les Hurons de Lorette-Wendake," *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec* 30, 3 (2000): 47, 35–51.

38. Lainey and Peace, "Louis Sawanatanen," 110.

principles to future generations.<sup>39</sup> The Grand Chief's embroidered dress, the wampum, and the transmission of national history through the oral tradition illustrate the role of visual arts within the art of community in its participative, performed, and shared components.

Twenty-five years later, the visual arts again played a role in diplomatic customs as the embodiment of community ties and collective identity when, between 1847 and 1854, Lord and Lady Elgin received a pair of birchbark, moosehair-embroidered wall plaques.<sup>40</sup> This was in the context of meetings between Grand Chief François-Xavier Tahourenché and Governor General Lord Elgin. Lord and Lady Elgin visited the home of the Grand Chief on formal occasions, and the plaques they received were attributed to Marguerite Vincent La8ionkié, mother of the Grand Chief.<sup>41</sup> They feature Lord and Lady Elgin's respective coats of arms embroidered in the botanical illustration style of the period and convey two messages. First, they are a material embodiment of Wendat identity; second, the symbolism of their motifs suggests Wendat and British connections as allies. In Lady Elgin's plaque, her family's coat of arms is aligned with the strawberry, a symbol of Wendat beliefs. | fig. 5 | The materials and motifs used represent the community, its traditions, and lands. In the context of public speech and the performance of chiefly protocols, a gift of moosehair embroidery was a public enactment of community identity and representation. The integration of the visual arts within the performance of ceremonial customs strengthened public awareness and honoured Wendat culture, traditions, and presence.

The Elgin plaques demonstrate how Wendat chiefs continued their customary diplomacy. They welcomed British and other European leaders to Wendake, and made formal visits to the seat of colonial government in Quebec. Following long-established Wendat protocols, these visits were community events. The community attended those held in Wendake, while Wendat delegations made formal visits to European dignitaries.<sup>42</sup> When the Wendat chiefs and foreign leaders, be they Indigenous or colonial, spoke together about specific issues, it was in the context of a community gathering.<sup>43</sup>

As a performance of Wendat diplomatic ceremony, moosehair-embroidered dress and gifts were a highly visual assertion of national identity and skill. In 1880, a group of thirty Wendat men and women accompanied Grand Chief Paul Tahourenché on a formal visit to welcome the new Lieutenant Governor, Théodore Robitaille. | fig. 6 | The envoy included Christine Vincent Atiaanonk, whose father Grand Chief Nicolas Vincent Tsawenehohi spoke in 1842 to a gathering of British dignitaries and Quebec leaders at Chateau St. Louis about the importance of ancestral customs, and thus represented an intergenerational continuity. The visit followed an ancient Wendat tradition used to mark the investiture of the new chief of an allied nation. The moosehair-embroidered, formal Wendat dress of the delegation was part of a diplomatic performance of national presence that exemplified the art of community and its importance to all areas of Wendat public, private, and cultural life.

### The Sagamité Feast: Embodiment of the Art of Community

In the *sagamité* feast, visual art, protocol, and custom came together in a culmination of the art of community. The feast was used to celebrate occasions

39. Lainey, *La "Monnaie des Sauvages,"* 27, 59–60, 54–55; Mary A. Druke, "Iroquois Treaties, Common Forms, Varying Interpretations," in *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Guide to the Treaties of the Six Nations and Their League*, ed. Francis Jennings, et al. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 90.

40. Lowe, "The Art of Community Transformation," 457.

41. François-Xavier Picard Tahourenché, *Journal de François-Xavier Picard Tahourenché*, archives, Conseil de la nation huronne-wendat.

42. *The Sydney Morning Herald* September 21, 1842.

43. Antoine Bastien, 858, B-G-96.2 (25), Marius Barbeau Fonds, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, QC.



**Figure 6. Huron-Wendat delegation from Wendake (Lorette) at Spencerwood, Quebec City, 1880.**  
Photo: Jules-Ernest Livernois, Spencerwood delegation, McCord Museum MP-000.223.



**Figure 7. Henry Daniel Thielcke, Presentation of a Newly Elected Chief of the Huron Tribe, Canada, 1839.** Collection of the McCord Museum M20009.

of every kind, including name-givings, weddings, mourning, the investiture of a new chief, the adoption of an honorary chief, and the reception of foreign leaders. A *sagamité* feast was sometimes held just for the Wendat, for the enjoyment of the community and to maintain the nation's integrity.<sup>44</sup> Involving all members of the community, it promoted "ties of solidarity and collective identity among participants" and was, as such, the essence of the art of community.<sup>45</sup>

Wendat elders described this celebration as an all-you-can-eat feast of three days or longer. It was structured throughout by protocols governing the roles of different community members.<sup>46</sup> Young and old were dressed in special-occasion attire. Men wore moosehair-embroidered greatcoats, moccasins, leggings, headdresses, and silver armbands and medals. Women's dress included embroidered moccasins, leggings, ribbon-worked skirts, and silver medallions, broaches, and earrings.<sup>47</sup>

One of the chiefs acted as a master of ceremonies and guided all aspects of the event.<sup>48</sup> The *sagamité* was served in the largest home in the community or outdoors in summer. After the feast, songs and dances went on far into the night. When members of other Indigenous nations were invited, men took part in displays of archery, races, and games. Gifts of moosehair-embroidered moccasins acted as intermediaries between the Wendat and their Indigenous and settler-nation allies, and were presented to both leaders and the most outstanding participants in competitions.<sup>49</sup> The feast was a time to pass on cultural knowledge, including Wendat songs and dances, and also to reaffirm international relations and promote trade.

The following three stories of feasts illustrate the importance of this tradition and how participation in it sustained a dynamic community. These feasts include one held in 1838 to celebrate the adoption of Judge Robert Symes as an honorary chief; a reception for Wendat guests sponsored by Lieutenant General Sir James McDonnell in Quebec City in 1842; and the *sagamité* feast of 1905, which celebrated the adoption of Swedish Consul General Folke Cronholme as an honorary chief.

#### *The Adoption of Judge Robert Symes, 1838*

A tableau portrait by Henry David Thielcke depicts Judge Robert Symes with Wendat chiefs and community members at the *sagamité* feast marking his adoption as an honorary chief. | **fig. 7** | The practice of adoption brought members of allied nations into the Wendat community in kinship terms, integrating European newcomers into an Indigenous trade and political framework.<sup>50</sup> Judge Symes' adoption followed this tradition and was enacted in recognition of the help that he and his wife had given the community during a cholera epidemic.<sup>51</sup> Thielcke records community members' moosehair-embroidered, special-occasion dress in detail, as well as the chief's dress presented to Judge Symes.

Antoine Bastien, son of Grand Chief Maurice Sébastien Agniolen, also described the gifts presented to Judge Symes as "*la plus belle paire de raquette et de souliers qu'il était possible de faire à cette époque-là.*"<sup>52</sup> The Judge received his Huron name, Hotsawati (he who has defended his country and acts as mediator).<sup>53</sup> The ceremony concluded with the *sagamité*, followed by songs and dancing.<sup>54</sup>

44. Marius Barbeau, Box B50, B-G-2.4 (1, 6), Marius Barbeau Fonds, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, QC.

45. Lowe, "The Art of Community Transformation," 457.

46. Antoine Bastien, Box B 58, B-G-96.2 (25), Marius Barbeau Fonds, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, QC.

47. *La Presse*, August 1, 1885, vol. 1, no. 235, np.

48. Antoine Bastien, Box B58 B-G-96.2 (23), Marius Barbeau Fonds, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, QC.

49. Antoine Bastien, Box B58 B-G-96.2 (26), Marius Barbeau Fonds, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, QC.

50. Bruce Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), 64.

51. "Indian Festivities and Installation of Chiefs," *The Literary Transcript and General Intelligencer*, 1, 13, February 24, 1838.

52. Antoine Bastien, Fetes Lorette, Box 51, B.G. 13.1, Marius Barbeau Fonds, Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, QC.

53. "Indian Festivities and Installation of Chiefs."

54. *Ibid.*



This event demonstrates the dynamic art of community in all its elements, from the *sagamité* feast and moosehair-embroidered clothing worn by Wendat attendees to the gifts presented to the Judge and the traditional songs and dances that were integral to this ceremonial complex.

*Feast to Honour the Birth of the Prince of Wales, 1842*

On January 14, 1842, Lieutenant General Sir James McDonnell held a formal reception for the Wendat leadership at Chateau St. Louis, the official residence of the Crown's representative. The Quebec populace watched the procession of over seventy Wendat in full dress walking to the Chateau. Judge Symes, or Chief Hotsawati, presented Grand Chief Nicolas Vincent Tsawenhohi and the Wendat delegation to Sir James MacDonnell.<sup>55</sup> The Grand Chief made a speech to Sir James in Huron, reaffirming the Wendat alliance with the Crown and the Queen and their "readiness to assist in fighting her enemies."<sup>56</sup>

The reception was followed by a dinner hosted by Sir James, which unfolded in the tradition of a Wendat feast, with customary speeches, traditional songs, and dances.<sup>57</sup> This event demonstrates how the Wendat art of community was effective both within the nation and in building networks outward. It reinforced Wendat presence in the region and, at the same time, drew the Lieutenant General and British officers into the Wendat community through the inclusivity of the celebration.

*The Adoption of Honorary Chief Folke Cronholm, 1905*

The adoption of Swedish Consul General Folke Cronholm as honorary chief demonstrated Wendat commitment to their customs and the continuity of these traditions. Cronholm's friendship with the Wendat and his bravery and spirit were cited as reasons for this honour, and a moosehair-embroidered chief's coat, feather headdress, leggings, and moccasins were presented to him.<sup>58</sup> | **fig. 3** |

The Art of Community in the Twentieth Century

In 1958, Madame Edgar Gros Louis, Chief Anthianonk (she who looks after the well), the same name held by Christine, daughter of Grand Chief Nicolas Vincent, was interviewed by Marthe Hogue for the journal *La terre et le foyer*. Chief Anthianonk, a community leader and skilled artist, proudly displayed her work in moosehair-embroidered and beaded special-occasion dress and souvenir wares.<sup>59</sup> Also present was her husband, Chief Edgar Gros-Louis Antirantara, who spoke of the oral tradition: "*Ma grand-mère nous racontait beaucoup d'histoires... et quand elle nous disait: 'Écoutez bien, ça c'est pas un conte, mais une histoire vraie, 'je peux vous assurer que j'en perdais rien. Aujourd'hui c'est moi qui apprend aux enfants l'histoire de notre tribu.*"<sup>60</sup> The importance of Wendat oral history, passed on from grandparents to Wendat youth, as well as the value placed on visual arts and the pride taken in ceremonial dress, continued into the twentieth century. Hogue concluded that the Wendat wished to keep their identity through adherence to their ancestral traditions, thus echoing the assertion made by Grand Chief Nicolas Vincent Tsawenhohi in 1842.<sup>61</sup> At the conclusion of the interview, with the hospitality of her ancestors, Chief Anthianonk demonstrated Wendat adherence to custom by serving traditional *sagamité* to her guest.

55. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 21 1842.

56. *Ibid.*

57. *Ibid.*

58. Tehariolina, *La Nation huronne*, 329–330.

59. Hogue, "Madame Anthianonk," 9–10.

60. *Ibid.* 10.

61. *Ibid.*



**Figure 8. Huron-Wendat Museum, Wendake, QC.**  
Photo: Teharihulen Michel Savard.

### The Art of Community Today: The Oral Tradition, Technology, and Contemporary Art

The art of community continues in Wendake today through new institutions, events, and programs designed to transmit and celebrate Wendat culture. Ancestral traditions have been adapted to contemporary technologies and formats as the Wendat art of community moves forward with twenty-first-century modes of communication.<sup>62</sup> Community events, visual arts, and ceremonies have a strong virtual presence in digital media and online, connecting community members in Wendake and others who live away. The oral tradition has taken on new forms through the powerful tools of digital technology. *Journal Yakwennra*, an online community newspaper, brings people together and keeps them informed, contributing to Wendat national cohesiveness and sense of belonging. Inaugurated in 2008, the Musée Huron-Wendat of Wendake, Quebec, also demonstrates the spirit of innovation built on community engagement. Here, practices that can be understood within Western curatorial customs of collection and exhibition have their origin in the Wendat art of community and remain embedded in Wendat values and worldview.<sup>63</sup> North American Indigenous museums or cultural centres established by First Peoples represent a new kind of institution, one that has emerged in recent decades. Grounded in Indigenous purposes and practices of representation, the Musée Huron-Wendat narrates and connects Wendat history to ongoing cultural traditions with the goal of preserving the nation's heritage and making it accessible.<sup>64</sup> | **fig. 8** |

The Musée Huron-Wendat is part of a hotel-conference centre complex, whose architecture draws on Wendat architectural styles. The museum is built in the circular form of a smokehouse and adjoins the hotel, which resembles a traditional longhouse structure. The museum has two gallery spaces: the permanent historical exhibition of visual arts and heritage objects—*Territories, Memories, Knowledge*—and the Yadia'wish Room (Turtle Room), which features a regularly updated program of contemporary Indigenous art. The historical exhibition space is surrounded by multi-media images of the Nionwentsïo, the

62. *Wendat endi' Nous, les Wendat.*

63. Annette de Stecher, "Integrated Practices: Huron-Wendat Traditions of Diplomacy and Museology," *Journal of Curatorial Studies*, 3, 1 (February 2014): 1–2.

64. James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 248–249.

Wendat territories, which affirm connections to the land. Moosehair embroidery is displayed and situated as a central component of ceremony, family, and economic life. *Mirror of a People: The Works and Legacy of Zachary Vincent* (2017), a recent exhibition of art by Wendat artist Zachary Vincent curated by Michel Savard, foregrounds the importance of the curatorial role, and documents Wendat history and culture from a community perspective. The museum is an international centre, attracting Canadian and European visitors. More importantly, it is there for the community and for the transmission of heritage, history, and culture to Wendat youth.<sup>65</sup>

The Wendat role of culture keeper—a person designated to safeguard the community's ceremonial objects and preserve Wendat stories and histories—continues today, not only in the Musée Huron-Wendat, but also in the Huron-Wendat Band Council Archives.<sup>66</sup> Archivist Stéphane Picard maintains and makes publically available the nation's documentary archives, which include databases of digitized images of Wendat historical artworks and community photographs. Contemporary technology makes connections across generations possible.

In the past, knowledge of materials and arts practices was passed down through family and clan. Today, in addition to these means, the Centre de développement de la formation et de la main-d'oeuvre Huron-Wendat (CDFM) preserves and transmits cultural know-how; it is a hub of activity.<sup>67</sup> Here, a range of traditional arts, from beading and quillwork to moosehair embroidery and wampum making, are taught to future generations. Wendat visual arts and the techniques of their production are an intangible cultural heritage central to the art of community, and through CDFM this heritage is preserved and disseminated. Experts in these different art forms are recorded as they demonstrate their techniques, and documentaries, such as the one about embroidery artist Mme. Marie-Paule Gros Louis, are produced. The oral tradition is in full evidence as students watch and learn from community experts. CDFM is also the centre of Wendat language learning.<sup>68</sup> In 2000, the language revitalization project was underway, providing classes to all age groups, from primary school students to adults.

Part of CDFM's programming is the Cabane d'automne, the traditional temporary camp used by Wendat hunters as they moved over their territories. Today, the Cabane d'automne is an annual community event held in the fall, during which Wendat community members celebrate their ancestral ties to the Nionwentsïo and pass this tradition on to new generations. Families meet on the Nionwentsïo to practice traditional activities and hold workshops on different forms of traditional knowledge, including moosehair embroidery. These events bring all generations together to participate in a celebration of Wendat cultural traditions.

Other organizations also make Wendake a cultural centre. Éditions Hannenorak, a publishing house dedicated to First Nations literature, was founded by two members of the Wendat community. Its publications record and share the stories and language of the Wendat and other Indigenous communities. Its purpose is to promote Indigenous culture, cosmologies, and issues, thus providing Indigenous peoples with an opportunity to express themselves on matters and in areas that constitute their distinct identity.<sup>69</sup>

65. de Stecher, "Integrated Practices," 52, 67, 70.

66. Lainey, *La "Monnaie des Sauvages"*, 27, 59–60, 54–55.

67. CDFM is the Huron-Wendat Centre for the development of training and manpower.

68. "Revitalisation de la langue wendat," Centre de développement, de la formation et de la main-d'oeuvre Huron-Wendat, <http://cdfmwendake.com/revitalisation-de-la-langue-wendat>.

69. "Qui sont les Éditions Hannenorak?," *À propos*, Les Éditions Hannenorak, <http://hannenorak.com/a-propos> (September 6, 2016).

The power of narrative and the spoken word remains equally present and active through public events. Storyteller Yolande Okia Picard presents Wendat tales during events at the Musée Huron-Wendat, while published versions of hers and others' stories bring the oral tradition to a written format.<sup>70</sup> The work of Wendat scholars<sup>71</sup> also contributes to the histories of Indigenous peoples, and makes important contributions to academic discourse grounded in Wendat values and worldviews. Together, Wendat individuals and national institutions build support for community identity and collective history.

### Contemporary Wendat Artists

Both traditional and contemporary art practices have a strong presence in Wendake. In this section, I will consider examples of both and explore how they function within the art of community today and contribute to a system of relationships and connectedness. As a traditional art form, embroidered dress continues to be a proud representation of Wendat culture and visual arts. This importance is illustrated by the story of the Gros-Louis sisters who embroidered headdresses for their children. The motifs of each headdress contain a personal narrative.<sup>72</sup> One sister chose a bear paw to represent her clan, another the tree of life, and a third embroidered a motif that represents her son's Wendat name. The sisters' knowledge of the art of embroidery thus becomes part of their families' heritage, which includes the symbolism of the headdresses and the motifs they contain, as well as knowledge of ceremonial customs and protocols associated with wearing a headdress. An article in *Journal Yakwennra* shared this transmission with the larger Wendat community.<sup>73</sup>

Historically, wampum is both a symbolically charged gift and a record of diplomatic engagement. Today, it is actively used in rebuilding relationships between Indigenous nations and settler communities in Quebec. In 2013, the *Wampum Project* took place; it was a regional commemorative initiative designed to raise awareness of the history of Indian Residential Schools. The wampum symbolized the coming together and sharing of the eleven First Nations of Quebec and settler communities.<sup>74</sup> During the project, participants from each community were "invited to leave a prayer or intention in one of the beads." Over the course of the project, Wendat artist Teharihulen Michel Savard used these beads to make the wampum, |fig. 9| whose narrative is read from left to right, and states the following:

The twelve lines represent the eleven Aboriginal Nations in Quebec as well as the Nation of Quebec. The four people united around the sacred fire symbolize the process of healing and truth as well as represent men and women from all Nations coming together. They are protected by the four directions and are in harmony with the four elements. The two parallel lines symbolize the will to continue together in harmony toward the future, all the while respecting the differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal [peoples]. The points that bring them together evoke the exchanges and the work that is being done to build unity and peace [Les douze traits représentent les onze Nations autochtones du Québec et la Nation québécoise. Les quatre personnages réunis autour du feu sacré illustrent le processus de guérison, de vérité et de rapprochement entre hommes et femmes de toutes les Nations. Ils sont sous la protection des quatre directions et en harmonie avec les quatre éléments. Les deux traits parallèles marquent une volonté d'avancer ensemble vers l'avenir dans le respect des différences entre Autochtones et non-autochtones. Les points qui les relient évoquent les échanges et le travail en cours en vue de construire l'unité et la paix.]<sup>75</sup>

Teharihulen Michel Savard's role as both artist and participant adapts Wendat ancestral customs to the needs of the present, and thus represents

70. Yolande Okia Picard, *Okia Te Conte: légendes et récits amérindiens* (Wendake: La Griffe de l'aigle, 1998); Huwennuwanenhs Louis-Karl Picard-Sioui, *La femme venue du ciel: mythe wendat de la création* (Wendake: Éditions Hannenorak, 2016); Manon Sioui, *L'Être à l'image des feuilles de maïs* (Wendake: Éditions Hannenorak, 2013).

71. Guy Sioui Durand, Jonathan Laine, Linda Sioui, and Dr. Georges Sioui, among others.

72. *Journal Yakwennra* Spring, July 15, 2015. <http://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/bs2472975>

73. Ibid.

74. "Project Wampum Belt, 2013: Regional Initiative of Commemoration" (@projetMansinahikan, April 5, 2016), [www.facebook.com/projetMansinahikan/photos/a.997118877023477.1073741828.949619521773413/1034429136625784/?type=3&theater](http://www.facebook.com/projetMansinahikan/photos/a.997118877023477.1073741828.949619521773413/1034429136625784/?type=3&theater).

75. Ibid.





**Figure 9. Teharihulen Michel Savard, *Project Wampum Belt*, 2013, Regional Initiative of Commemoration, Quebec.** Photo: Yves Savignac. This belt, made as part of the *Wampum Project*, is the tangible and lasting mark of the efforts made to raise awareness around the history of Indian Residential Schools. As well, it is the symbol of many nations coming together to share. From November 2012 to March 2013, participants of the *Wampum Project* were invited to leave a prayer or an intention in one of the beads. The Wendat artist Michel

Teharihulen Savard then made the belt using these beads over the course of this commemorative journey. Cette ceinture, réalisée dans le cadre du *Projet Wampum*, est la trace durable de la démarche de sensibilisation à l'histoire des pensionnats indiens et de rapprochement entre Nations au Québec. De novembre 2012 à mars 2013, les participants au *Projet Wampum* ont été invités à déposer une prière ou intention dans une des perles. Ce sont ces perles qui ont été ajoutées avec soin par l'artisan wendat Michel Teharihulen Savard, au fur et à mesure de notre voyage, pour réaliser la ceinture.

**Figure 10. Manon Sioui and Francine Picard, *La Fresque du peuple Wendat*, 2008, Place de la Nation, boulevard Bastien, Wendake, QC, 40 m<sup>2</sup>.** Designed and produced by Mural Création with the participation of Manon Sioui and Francine Picard ([www.citecreation.fr](http://www.citecreation.fr)). Produced by Tourisme Wendake, Commission de la capitale nationale du Québec, Capitale culturelle Canada. © Mural Création.





Figure 11. Teharihulen Michel Savard, *Reciprocité*, 2009.

the Wendat people, their interests, and their values, while also building and maintaining relationships with other nations. The beads embody the participants' acts of intention, and the motifs made with these beads record the history of the project as a healing accord between the twelve nations and an agreement for the future. Both Teharihulen Michel Savard's participation and the wampum itself comprise the art of community: the enduring customs of Wendat ancestors, which are as effective today as they were centuries ago.

Wendat artists working in contemporary art contribute to the Wendat art of community, some by addressing political issues, others by taking on a teaching role. *Fresque du peuple Wendat* (2008), a mural by Manon Sioui and Francine Picard located on a wall that runs beside the Kabir Kouba River in the center of Wendake, reflects the "higher good of communal values and beliefs."<sup>76</sup> | **fig. 10** | It tells the history of the Wendat people through a series of vignettes depicting daily and ceremonial activities, thus illustrating community life and its underlying values, such as ties to the land and cooperation between men and women.<sup>77</sup> In a sense, it is a political statement about Wendat values and history meant to educate Wendat youth and the broader public—a modern depiction of the collective practices that make up the art of community.

*Reciprocité* (2011), a performance by Teharihulen Michel Savard, addresses the oppressive power of the Indian Act, the federal law that still governs many aspects of Indigenous peoples' lives in Canada. For the performance, which illustrates the "significance of the arts as a mechanism for making political statements,"<sup>78</sup> Savard took a copy of the Indian Act into the woods and shot it with a rifle at almost point-blank range. | **fig. 11** | The document was then splattered with red to symbolize blood and the violence against Indigenous peoples, while wampum beads flowing from the bullet hole may be read as a symbol of broken government promises, or the attempts of Indigenous

76. Nancy Mithlo, "Our Indian Princess": *Subverting the Stereotype* (Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research, 2009), 72.

77. Georges E. Sioui, *The Heritage of the Circle* (Vancouver; Toronto: UBC Press, 1999), 119–122.

78. Mithlo, "Our Indian Princess," 46; *Reciprocité* was part of the exhibition *The Indian Act Revisited*, organized by the Musée Huron-Wendat in 2011.

peoples to negotiate with colonial governments.<sup>79</sup> The performance had pedagogical power and served to teach non-Indigenous peoples what life is like for Indigenous peoples living in Canada under a paternalistic, disempowering law.<sup>80</sup> Performance art is a form of showing and telling—the oral tradition in another mode—and this performance was about building relationships between communities by sharing a lived reality.

The installation *La fête des morts* (1998), by Sylvie Paré, brings contemporary Wendat art practice together with traditional art and embodies the continuity of family and community history. The installation centers on the artist's grandmother's black ceremonial robe and moosehair-embroidered head-dress, collar-ruff, and belt, which hang ten feet above the ground. The layout represents a secular altar and refers to the Fête des morts, the burial ceremony at the heart of pre- and early-contact Huron-Wendat culture and society; it is thus strongly representative of Huron-Wendat identity.<sup>81</sup> In *La fête des morts*, Paré reconstructs a memory of the ceremony and, at the same time, expresses Indigenous activism that reaffirms identity and territory.<sup>82</sup> Her installation reflects current issues anchored in the symbolic meanings of traditional forms.<sup>83</sup> This is not a nostalgic vision of tradition: it is a cultural reappropriation that turns toward the future. It integrates an Indigenous perspective within contemporary society and restores agency and authority to the original ceremonial function of the attire.<sup>84</sup> Paré refers to the latter as pieces of memory that reconnect the Huron-Wendat with the past in a celebratory context.<sup>85</sup> Embodying the art of community in the twenty-first century, *La fête des morts* represents the cultural strength, agency, and collective action of the Wendat, as well as their ability to thrive.

### Conclusion

The art of community—the collective creative practice of cultural traditions as a “source of renewal and revitalization”—is integral to, and constituent of, the continuing strength of the Wendat Nation.<sup>86</sup> This is evident in Wendat visual arts, cultural institutions, and events. Historically, customs and practices came together at the *sagamité* feast, a celebration of Wendat community. Today, the art of community continues, sustained by individuals as well as Wendat national cultural institutions. Culture keepers, such as storytellers, writers, scholars, curators, archivists, teachers, and artists, safeguard and transmit ancestral customs. The central position of visual arts in Wendat community values, traditions, and customs, suggests that Wendat art history is integral to this cultural complex. This understanding informs, nuances, and possibly rearranges Western art-historical interpretations of Wendat visual arts by privileging a Wendat worldview, which is grounded in the circle of relationships described by Georges Sioui in *Heritage of the Circle*.

In 2002, the Huron-Wendat Band Council developed a cultural policy statement, which CDFM updated in 2013 through individual and group community consultations that followed the collective practices of the art of community. In this statement, Grand Chief Konrad Sioui describes the collective future of the Wendat Nation, inviting all community members to take their place around the great circle for “*la valorisation de nos traditions et activités coutumières qui ont façonné la grande histoire de notre peuple fort et fier*.”<sup>87</sup> ¶

79. Lisa Monchalin, *The Colonial Problem: An Indigenous Perspective on Crime and Injustice in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 301.

80. Nancy Mithlo, “Our Indian Princess,” 46.

81. Sandra Dyck, *Urban Myths*, exh. cat., Karsh-Masson Gallery (Ottawa: KMG, 2000), 11.

82. Chloë Charce, *Entre-deux mondes : métissage, identité et histoire sur les traces de Sonia Robertson*, Sylvie Paré et Rebecca Belmore, ou, les parcours artistiques de trois femmes artistes autochtones, entre la mémoire et l’audace. MA thesis, Université du Québec à Montréal, 2008, 137, 80, 5.

83. Doxtator, “Basket Bead and Quill...,” 16–17.

84. Charce, *Entre-Deux Mondes*, 4, 67, 78.

85. Ibid.

86. Lowe, “The Art of Community Transformation,” 457.

87. *Wendat endi’ Nous, les Wendat*.