

Entwined

FREEDOM
SOVEREIGNTY
AND THE SEA



Σntwined

FREEDOM, SOVEREIGNTY, AND THE SEA

Table of Contents

Black and Indigenous Perspectives on Maritime History	1
Telling It Like It Is (and Was) BY CHERYLL TONEY HOLLEY, <i>Nipmuc</i>	2
Personal Thoughts from a Pequot and African Muhsatuk Resident BY LAWRENCE E. WILSON, “HIGH HORSE”; <i>Tribal Elder and Councilor; Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation</i>	4
A Foundation for the Future BY ELYSA ENGELMAN, <i>Mystic Seaport Museum</i>	6
Freedom Dreams and Sovereignty: Hopes for a Different and Just Future BY ANTHONY BOGUES, <i>Ruth J. Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice</i>	10
Our Story is Not, Our Story Is BY ANIKA LOPES, <i>Ancestral Bridges</i>	12
How We Survived BY STEVEN AND PAULA PETERS, <i>Mashpee Wampanoag</i>	16
Canoe, Sovereignty, and Freedom BY SIKA FOYER (EDI FRIEDLANDER), <i>Togolese</i>	17
Spirituality: An Exhibition in Honor of Our Ancestors BY AKEIA DE BARROS GOMES, <i>Mystic Seaport Museum</i>	20
Neekônâhuc cheek: Reclamation and Rematratrition BY BRAD MUSQUANTAMÔSQ LOPES, <i>Aqunahunut Wôpanâak/Aquinnah Wampanoag</i>	24
Reclaiming Our Freedom, Sovereignty, and the Sea: Contemporary Belongings	27
Restor(y)ing Indigenous Collections BY ALLYSON LAFORGE, <i>Brown University</i>	32





BLACK AND INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES ON MARITIME HISTORY

Kuhtah (Pequot) and Kalunga (Bantu) are our words for the Atlantic Ocean. Kuhtah/Kalunga and its tributaries, with its cycles of ebb and flow, push and pull, and trauma and healing forever connect the histories, cultures, peoples and legacies of ancestral African societies and kingdoms to the Sovereign Indigenous Nations of Turtle Island, or North America. Like waterways, contact between Africans and the Indigenous Nations of the Dawnland attests to the power of our ancestors, the circularity of time, and fundamental cycles of life, death, and rebirth. *Entwined* centers maritime histories in our own Indigenous, African, and African-descended worldviews and experiences. Unraveling the threads of existing narratives of the history of the Dawnland, Indigenous dispossession, and racialized slavery, *Entwined* is rooted in the voices of our ancestors and is rooted in our histories that have been silent or *silenced*. *Entwined* explores the enduring legacies, strength and resilience of Sovereign Indigenous Nations and African-descended peoples of the Dawnland. Foregrounding ancestral and descendant voices, *Entwined* re-weaves a narrative of our two maritime cultures whose histories are forever interwoven in the stories of our freedom, our sovereignty, and the sea.

TELLING IT LIKE IT IS (AND WAS)

By Cheryll Toney Holley, *Nipmuc*

For centuries, others have told our stories in ways that made their worlds and their perspectives shine. Our communities were accessorized, a supporting cast to the greatness of others – our truths never told. Venues for art and historic displays routinely lack community authenticity and rarely represent history and culture as perceived by those who lived it. And authenticity is crucial in telling stories that accurately reflect the experiences of both Black and Indigenous communities.

In 2022, I was able to join with tribal representatives and Black & Indigenous historians and artists to work on an exhibit at the Mystic Seaport as part of the Reimaging New England Histories (RNEH) Project. RNEH is the result of a Mellon-funded grant to tell the history of the area now-called New England from the perspectives of its Black and Indigenous peoples. The committee included individuals from different tribal and Black communities to ensure diverse cultural representation. Each community represented had its own unique history, experiences, and cultural nuances. By bringing together people from various backgrounds, the committee captured a more comprehensive and unique narrative that reflects the richness of Black and Indigenous history in New England. This collaborative experience also recognized and highlighted the overlapping identities and experiences of individuals who belong to both Black and Indigenous communities. It acknowledged the complexity and diversity within our communities.

Our communities were accessorized, a supporting cast to the greatness of others – our truths never told.

As a community member immersed in the creation process, I was empowered to share my own stories and contribute to the preservation of my peoples’ histories. That experience fostered a sense of ownership and pride for me, as I actively participated in shaping how the narratives of my communities were presented to the public. The committee was also committed to featuring cultural aspects of both the past and present showcasing the richness and resilience of Black and Indigenous cultures in New England and challenging historical narratives that marginalized or overlooked our communities. Collaborating on this project also promoted unity and cooperation between the respective communities. Creating the exhibit together demonstrated the power of coming together to celebrate shared histories while respecting and honoring individual differences.

The exhibition will be a valuable educational tool, offering visitors a chance to learn about the history, struggles, and achievements of Black and Indigenous communities in New England. It illustrates the challenges our peoples have faced and continue to face. Hopefully, it will generate understanding, empathy, and a more accurate comprehension of the vibrancy and beauty of our local Black and Indigenous communities. The diversity of the exhibit committee made it possible to help create a more authentic, inclusive, and comprehensive representation of Black and Indigenous history in New England. The exhibition is a true reflection of the distinct experiences and cultures within these communities, fostering understanding and appreciation among both community members and the broader public.



Wampum Beads, 17th century

MAKER ONCE KNOWN
Shell

Trade beads made from quahog shell, 3mm by 3mm, two purple and two white, discovered on the site of the 1637 Pequot War Massacre directly across the Mystic River from Mystic Seaport Museum.

THE MASHANTUCKET PEQUOT MUSEUM AND RESEARCH CENTER, MASHANTUCKET, CT

Squant’s Gorget Necklace, 2023

ELIZABETH JAMES-PERRY,
AQUINNAH WAMPANOAG
Quahog shell, milkweed fiber, black walnut and mint and chlorophyll dye, alum mordant

Maushop’s Earrings, 2023

ELIZABETH JAMES-PERRY,
AQUINNAH WAMPANOAG
Quahog shell, copper wire

These pieces are equal parts honor and humor. Created as gift for the creative giants Maushop and Squant, the dual/complementary Earth and Atlantic Ocean shapers are central to Aquinnah Wampanoag people’s beliefs. They honor aspects of creation that can’t be quantified or contained.

These pieces are made from quahog shells with nice coloration. They recall stories out of deep time, sharing that awareness with the next generation and hinting to the broader world the strong ties we have to our homelands and seas.

COLLECTION OF ELIZABETH JAMES-PERRY



PERSONAL THOUGHTS FROM A PEQUOT AND

By Lawrence E. Wilson, “High Horse”; Tribal Elder and Councilor, Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation



Here, our history...takes center stage in bringing alive the cycles of trauma and healing as real today as in the past, where both find solace in water and sea-based Indigenous and African spirituality.

AFRICAN MUHSATUK RESIDENT

It is with pride and privilege that I share thoughts of this extraordinarily fine exhibit, *Entwined: Freedom, Sovereignty, and the Sea*. As a former Director of Admissions of a New York City art and design college, I have observed or directed the evolution of several visual art exhibitions. Never, however, have I been touched as deeply as I have by this exhibit.

Candidly, I have felt the spirit of my Indigenous and African ancestors at nearly every turn in *Entwined's* development. Indeed, the show tells the stories of Indigenous and Black maritime history the way our ancestors would want them told. Here, our history is not merely the typical narrow sliver of a larger European influenced maritime past; rather, *Entwined* takes center stage in bringing alive the cycles of trauma and healing as real today as in the past, where both find solace in water and sea-based Indigenous and African spirituality.

I am a “local” of this community once called Muhsatuk, the aboriginal name for Mystic. I grew up along the banks of its captivating river where Mystic Seaport Museum stands today, and adjacent to the battleground where the Pequot massacre took place. For nearly 75 years, I have celebrated this land – Pequot land – as have countless generations of Eastern Pequots. I proudly descend from these aboriginal people, in the same way I originate from my African enslaved forebears.

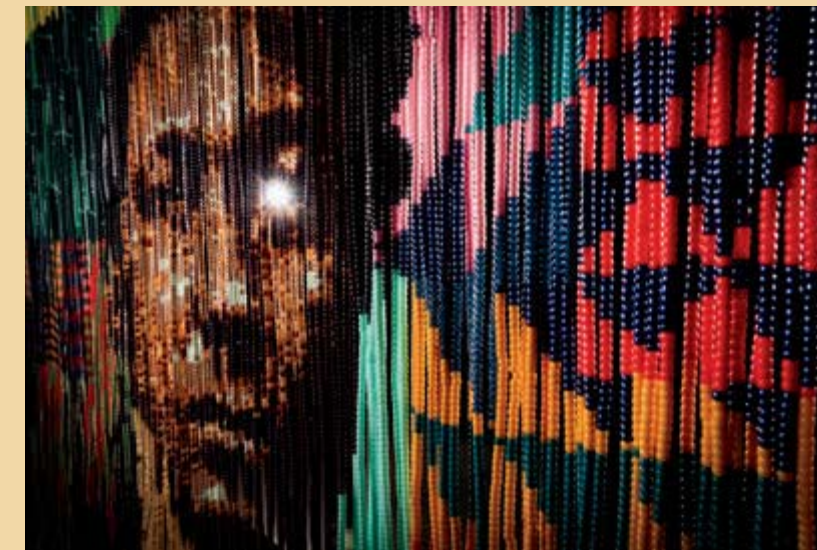
Kirdi Apron, early-mid 20th century

MAKER ONCE KNOWN

Glass beads, cowrie shells, cotton thread, fiber cord

Aprons like this one from Cameroon denote age, status and social condition. They are worn to attract attention and protect against evil. Attached at the bottom of the apron, the cowrie shells symbolize the ocean and its wealth and reinforce the meaning of womanhood. African-descended people in the Dawnland would have had to adapt these symbols and meaning systems to their new reality.

YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY BEQUEST OF PAUL F. WALTER



Detail from *Wail on Whalers*, a portrait of Amos Haskins, by Felandus Thames

I am moved by the clarity the exhibit provides. Steeped in authenticity and accuracy, *Entwined: Freedom, Sovereignty, and the Sea* sets the record straight. Instead of learning from the colonizers as history books allege, our ancestors more accurately drew upon our 12,000+ years of maritime and ecological knowledge, enabling them to endure and thrive despite the challenges of history, still there even to today. *Entwined* proudly defines and engages a reclamation that illuminates Pequot and West African languages, traditions captured through storytelling and contemporary art, and our genealogical networks which are the very foundation of our governing community.

How far Mystic Seaport Museum has come, and this uniquely crafted exhibit is credence to its progress! Local Indigenous and Black residents remember all too vividly when institutions like the Seaport revered a vision that excluded diversity of race, ethnicity, gender, and thought.

Today, among the Museum's priorities is learning from divergent people. It has shifted its focus to include a curator and team that value relationship-building with Pequot and other New England tribes, as much or even more than exhibitions like this one. The components of these relationships – Dialogue, Respect, Trust, and Reciprocity – combine to honor our ancestors and the next seven generations, as we share our heritage and, ultimately, reclaim our ancestral relationship to the sea.



*We have traveled
a long way, with
many miles to go
still in proving to
be, in the words
of our founders,
“inspirational to
future generations.”*

Carvings

WILLIAM AND ISAAC PHARAOH,
MONTAUKETT

The presence of the Pharaoh brothers, indentured at Sylvester Manor at the ages 8 and 5 in the year 1829, is powerfully felt in the “ship graffiti” carved into the attic walls. Forty-three ships have been counted; some are extraordinary carvings with great detail, including intricate riggings and sails. In February 1842, when William was nearly nineteen years old (his indenture would have ended in just eighteen months), his yearning to be free outweighed all else. He ran away and found his freedom by enlisting on the whaling vessel *Superior* in New London.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SYLVESTER MANOR

A FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE

By Elysa Engelman, Mystic Seaport Museum

As an institution, a museum, and a community of choice, we at Mystic Seaport Museum are conscious of those who came before us and the many lessons we can learn from their words and deeds at the Museum.

We build on a foundation laid for us in 1929 by our three founders, residents of Mystic, Connecticut who saw a need to protect, preserve, and share maritime materials and skills. The nonprofit they founded, originally called the Marine Historical Association, has since grown greatly in size and scope and been re-named. Yet we work every day to remain true to the founders’ intent to be “educational in purpose, national in scope, and inspirational to future generations.”

Over the decades, the Museum mission, scope, and vision have shifted, shaped by current concerns and events. The new vision statement pledges “Mystic Seaport Museum will reimagine the interchange between maritime heritage and broader contemporary culture.” This includes acknowledging and reckoning with our growing awareness of how traditional maritime scholarship and museum work has failed to center the experiences, voices, and perspectives of many people, including women, Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color. The Museum has long demonstrated a serious commitment to including more diverse perspectives, but this has been episodic and inward-focused rather than consistent and community-led or responsive.

A search through the institutional archives and living memory shows that over the past 25 years, Mystic Seaport Museum curators, educators, scholars, and students have presented to the public a number of projects focusing on Indigenous and Black maritime experiences and material culture. At times, this work to uplift diverse stories was self-contained, drawing solely or mainly upon internal collections and knowledge. Increasingly, over the years, efforts have been grounded in community partnerships and a public-history approach, recognizing the authority of descendants, cultural practitioners, and knowledge-keepers.

Some of these past efforts fall under the heading of scholarship and publications. These include the ongoing Paul Cuffe Fellowship program, begun in 1989 to support outside researchers coming to the Museum

to conduct research on Native and African Americans’ maritime experiences, overseen for 20 years by Dr. Glenn Gordinier and then Paul O’Pecko. Also in this category was a ground-breaking series of public conferences and published proceedings, “Race, Ethnicity, and Power in Maritime America” in 1995, 2000, and 2006 (“Gender” was added to the title in 2006) organized and run by Dr. Gordinier. These efforts have supported numerous dissertations, books, articles, and public-history projects around the region and beyond.

Special exhibits exploring Black and Indigenous maritime topics have brought forward important stories and artifacts for a broader public audience. These include “Native Legacy” (1999), an exhibit of Indigenous watercraft including umiak, kayak, and canoes as well as “Black Hands, Blue Seas: The Maritime Experience of African Americans,” (2006–2007) which traced the impact of Black men and women on our nation’s maritime endeavors through their labor, activism, and exploration. Then came “Frozen In: Capt. Comer and the Hudson Bay Inuit” (2008–2009) a critical step forward in curatorial practice, with then-curator Fred Calabretta engaging over decades in conversations, consultation, and cultural exchanges with Inuit descendants and knowledge-keepers from Hudson Bay. The resulting exhibit highlighted how the Inuit contributed significantly to the success and survival

of American whalers who made many voyages (about 100 from New London alone) to the Eastern Arctic.

Some of the projects have involved multiple activities and areas of the Museum, from educational and public programs through demonstrations and planetarium shows to films and traveling exhibits. Most famous of these revolved around the construction of Freedom Schooner *Amistad*. For two years, Museum visitors could watch shipwrights building the full-size replica of the 129-foot long, two-masted Cuban schooner upon which African-born Mende captives revolted in 1839, took their freedom, and managed to bring the vessel to U.S. waters in Long Island Sound. Their actions led to a famous Supreme Court case that raised support for the abolition of slavery. Witnesses to the replica schooner’s launch in 2000 still speak with emotion about the ceremony, during which thousands of people gathered to see waters from the shores of Cuba, Sierra Leone, and Long Island cast upon the hull, to hear bells rung out 53 times for the original African freedom-seekers, and to hear about plans to sail the schooner under the command of its first captain, William Pinkney, the first person of African descent to sail alone around the world. After a transatlantic voyage to Europe, West Africa, and the Caribbean, *Amistad* is a frequent visitor to Mystic Seaport Museum docks and shipyard, as well as a frequent programming partner.

The *Entwined* exhibit, however, is special, building upon the spirit of these past successes but radically re-placing Black and Indigenous experiences, stories, cultural belongings and artistic creations at the center. This played-out behind the scenes, during each step of the exhibition process. For more than 18 months, an illustrious external exhibit committee of Black and Indigenous scholars, museum leaders, teachers, and community activists led the content creation, under the capable leadership of Dr. Akeia de Barros Gomes and with the careful guidance of SmokeSygnals, the indigenous-owned exhibit design firm. Steve Peters and the team at SmokeSygnals managed all aspects of the writing, video production, design, fabrication, and installation of the exhibit, including the burning of the canoe by the guest artists and the creation of the wetu dwelling structure using traditional Wampanoag methods and materials. The results are unlike any exhibit that Mystic Seaport Museum has ever hosted.

On a larger, institutional level, this exhibit, this catalog, and the larger Reimagining New England Histories project have made it possible for us to learn, to grow, and to improve as an institution, a community, and as people. Internships and fellowships have brought outside students, scholars, and emerging professionals to our site to learn from and teach us while conducting research, creating new



additions to our grounds such as a Three Sisters Garden and African garden, as well as the Sea Connects Us panels placed in prominent locations throughout the campus. The project has led to the creation of new positions at Mystic Seaport Museum in social maritime history, to sustain long-term community relations, communication, and collaboration with our tribal Indigenous and Black neighbors and colleagues. And internally the project has contributed to a larger internal movement toward greater diversity, inclusivity, and accessibility.

Entwined is an important milestone, but just one on a long road. It is up to all of us here to carry its lessons forward. There is more work and learning to come, some of it difficult and slow. As a predominantly white institution, we have more progress to make in diversifying our staff, volunteers, and board of trustees. And more work to do in making sure that visitors encounter BIPOC stories and perspectives throughout the site.

The once-tiny Marine Historical Association of 1929 looks quite different today as we approach our centennial. I find it especially apt that *Entwined* occupies the entire first floor of the Stillman building, which was one of our first exhibit galleries. It was here in 1935, a year after first opening to the public, that just under 200 visitors paid a quarter each

to gain entrance two afternoons a week to see a small collection of figureheads and ship models. Now, more than 250,000 visitors each year enter through our front doors, where they are greeted with this statement:

By its very essence, maritime history is grounded in diversity of thought, culture, and experience.

We believe that in both sharing our collective maritime heritage and acting as a cultural anchor in our community, we must include these varied identities and perspectives in all aspects of the Museum by shaping our policies to support equitable and inclusive practices throughout the organization.

The *Entwined* exhibit and catalog – and the larger project activities undertaken in partnership with tribal nations, Indigenous institutions and individuals, and Black community groups along with our academic partners Brown University, Williams College, and the Williams-Mystic Program – have proved a catalyst for change at Mystic Seaport Museum in ways both highly visible and deeply felt. We have traveled a long way, with many miles to go still in proving to be, in the words of our founders, “inspirational to future generations.”



ABOVE AND RIGHT: Carvings by William and Isaac Pharaoh (Montaukett)
PHOTO COURTESY OF SYLVESTER MANOR

FREEDOM DREAMS AND SOVEREIGNTY: HOPES FOR A DIFFERENT AND JUST FUTURE

By Anthony Bogues, Ruth J. Simmons Center
for the Study of Slavery and Justice

There is a deep untruth about the founding of America and the so called New England States. It is an untruth deeply embedded into the nightmare of the so-called American dream. It is an untruth taught in many high schools, propagated by some museums and TV documentaries. Even some holidays are built upon this untruth. The untruth is the story told by the early British settler colonists of the Dawnland that this region which the settlers renamed, “New England” was to be the “city on the hill.” The dreamscape that would represent a new founding and therefore a new beginning of America as an idea. When John Winthrop first used the phrase in 1630, he evoked and designated the settler colony of Massachusetts Bay as the material geographical expression of Native American dispossession. The so-called “city on the hill” became the land of traumatic hell for its indigenous inhabitants: a place of woe, of lands lost, of constant battles, of cultures ravaged, of various forms of servitude including slavery. Yet history indicates that domination and social systems which seek to crush people never fully succeed. Ancient institutions might be destroyed but even when military defeated, human beings find ways to tell their own stories, to every day construct themselves where and when possible as human beings. In doing so, they overthrow some of the deepest untruths that elites tell about history. In enacting historical truths, telling their own stories about their lives, Black and Indigenous peoples of the Dawnland find new ways to navigate the present, because the stories of the past are never about a so-called past, they are about the complex relationships between past, present and the possibilities of a different and just future.

The deep requirement to tell the different histories of indigenous and Black communities from the perspective and within the traditions of these communities was one of the key driving force of the proposal which the Simmons Center at Brown, Williams College and Mystic Seaport Museum made to the Mellon Foundation. We did so in the middle of COVID, a time of crisis. We did so with hope though because the historical necessity for these new stories was also a political one. That is by working through the methods of Public History, foregrounding the community historians and their roles as storytellers about the lives of

these communities the project would demonstrate not only the “facts” through new histories but would reorientate how we think about history itself. Thus the formal title of the project, “Reimagining New England Histories.” Time will tell whether or not the project has been successful but we are now with the opening of the exhibition, *Entwined: Freedom Sovereignty and the Sea* at an inflection point in the project.

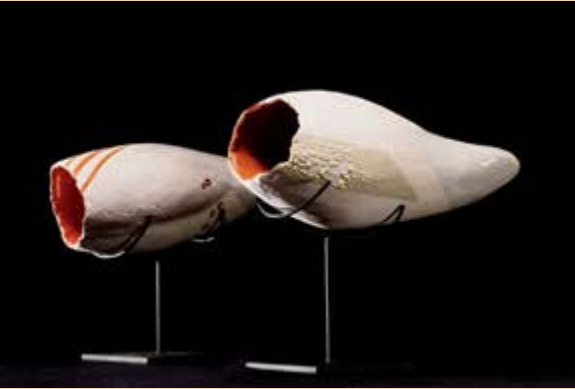
A core element of the project were forms of democratic practice. This exhibition is an example of this practice. For sure there was a lead curator but she did not lead in the conventional sense. Her role was a gatherer and facilitator and then of course implementor – the doer of the many recommendations, advice and inputs from the black and indigenous communities, so in this note, tribute needs to be paid to Dr. Akeia de Barros Gomes and the diverse community curatorial team that worked with her. They have craved out a new democratic practice of Public History. Given the location of the exhibition, it is of course an exercise in maritime history. The Caribbean poet, Derrick Walcott once noted that the “sea is history.” He was pointing us as to how water and water ways were forms of life: ways of life for the enslaved African where both life and death were inseparable. The Atlantic is a graveyard of the many Africans who were thrown overboard by slave merchants but it is also a space of many flights of freedom of return to Guinea by many captive Africans. This sea also became a possible venue of freedom for both enslaved Africans and indigenous communities as new bonds and solidarities could be formed away from the land based domination of American settler colonialism. The regime of settler colonialism disrupted patterns of both freedom and sovereignty for the indigenous peoples of the region. It created patterns of human enslavement both for African and the indigenous. It created a race-based anti-black society. In reimagining the complex histories of the Dawnland, in exploding the untruths that today pass for history, we disrupt effects of the regime of settler colonialism and we begin the possibilities of new mappings which may allow us to construct just futures.

*Yet history indicates that
domination and social systems
which seek to crush people
never fully succeed.*



Rattles by Robin Spears

OUR STORY IS NOT, OUR STORY IS



Breach: Logbook 15 / Scrimshaw Study #2, 2015
COURTNEY M. LEONARD, SHINNECOCK
Ceramic

In the Dawnland Indigenous whalers predated colonization before they became engaged in the industry. Whaling was also an inspiration for artistic interpretation now endangered by ecological concerns. With this ceramic sculpture of whale tooth art, informed by historical research and motivated by environmental sustainability Leonard is culturally viable answering her own question. “Can a culture sustain itself when it no longer has access to the environment that fashions that culture?”

MYSTIC SEAPORT MUSEUM

By Anika Lopes, *Ancestral Bridges*

In the tapestry of our narrative, betrayal and erasure do not define us; instead, our story is a tapestry woven with threads of resilience and shared history. Within the Dawnland, the echoes of genocide and enslavement resonate, inviting us to collectively acknowledge the painful chapters of our past. Yet, it is through the interconnected threads of Native American, European American, and African American histories – in that order – that we weave the fabric of American history, particularly within the context of New England.

Our tale unfolds in the brackish waters of cultural intersection, where incoming ships brought two distinct worlds together, accompanied by unimaginable brutality. Yet, amidst the waves of adversity, our story emerges as a testament to ingenuity, indigeneity, and unwavering perseverance. Like estuaries holding multiple truths, we embrace the diversity of experiences, creating a space where new life sprouts from the convergence of different cultures. We, the voices of the silenced, embody our narrative through oral history, remedies, art, culture, song, dance, and the rhythmic drumbeat that echoes through time. Past, present, and future intertwine, anchored in the resilience of our ancestors, shaping a collective identity that acknowledges both the shadows and the light.

Water is Our Life-Force

Our lands, our people and our cultures are the vessel that hold the water.

A broken vessel no longer holds water. In the birth, death, and rebirth of its original form, some fragments are damaged, some are ground into dust. In the rebirth of the vessel, if we are not careful, it is subject to continued fracture, fragmentation and leaks. We too are fragmented. However, the pain of colonization and history of fragmentation is not the sum of our stories. Like the rebirth of this vessel, *Entwined* reflects the love that it takes to reassemble the fragments of our Indigenous and Black maritime stories that have existed since time immemorial under the constant threat of erasure. *Entwined* is the love and work that goes into reclaiming our ancestral relationships to the sea. *Entwined* is the love and work required to reclaim our sovereignty, Indigenous nationhoods, Black identities, and self-determination. Just as it takes love and care to reassemble a fragmented vessel, *Entwined* represents the perseverance and solidarity required of our Indigenous and Black communities to assert and maintain our freedom, kin, and communities...and we will continue this work until the vessel holds the water once more.

Aboriginal Cooking Pot, circa 500 BC
MAKER ONCE KNOWN
Shell tempered earthenware

While simple, the tools of Indigenous Tribes were effective. Both in the Dawnland and throughout the African continent shell tempering technology in ceramics resisted fragmentation in the production of the vessel.

CONNECTICUT STATE ARCHAEOLOGISTS OFFICE
OF STATE OF ARCHAEOLOGY UNIVERSITY OF
CONNECTICUT





Rattles, 2012

ROBIN SPEARS

Box and musk turtle shells, deer antler handles, crow feathers, sea shells, wampum, shells, mountain laurel wooden stand, turkey feathers

COLLECTION OF ROBIN SPEARS

A Creation Story of Skywoman

Before there was land, ocean covered the earth and Sky Woman lived in the heavens. In anticipation of giving birth, Sky Woman emerged from a hole in the heavens and descended slowly toward earth on the wings of two swans. Birds and animals desperately swam to the depths of the sea to collect some mud and were unsuccessful until finally Muskrat succeeded, but only after exhausting his last breath. Muskrat floated to the surface clenching a fist full of loam that was spread over Turtle's back to make a homeland where Sky Woman would live and raise her family. The land on Turtle's back grew and grew to become the whole of the continent we know today as North America. This is why we call this land Turtle Island.

Turtle Shell War Shield, 2023

ROBIN SPEARS

Snapping turtle shell, deer antler point, embedded stone points, hemp twine, leather, acrylic paint

COLLECTION OF ROBIN SPEARS



African IJÀPÁ Tales

Africans and African descendants in the Dawnland undoubtedly recognized the similarities between Ijàpá (tortoise) and Dawnland turtles. Like the circle of the Bakongo cosmogram, the African Ijàpá shell symbolizes the cyclical movement of the sun – from its birth over the horizon, to its lifespan in the sky, and its death below the horizon where it waits to be reborn. Tortoise shells also contain 13 scutes and 28 platelets and are used as lunar calendars.

Throughout West Africa, there are narratives of Ijàpá as one of the first beings made by the Creator. Ijàpá folktales are of a wise trickster.



Oar with Turtle Shell, 2023

ROBIN SPEARS

Snapping turtle shell, hemp twine, leather, moose antler handle, acrylic paint, red cedar wood shaft

COLLECTION OF ROBIN SPEARS

Thirteen Moons

The turtle not only offered his back to create land, but also to represent the 13 moons of the indigenous calendar. The turtle shell is made up of 13 scutes, or tiles, that represent each full moon of the year and surrounding those tiles are 28 platelets, one for each day of the moon cycle. This is not coincidental but a spiritual sign telling our people how to honor cycles of time.

HOW WE SURVIVED

By Steven and Paula Peters, Mashpee Wampanoag

The *Entwined* exhibit took a refreshing and holistic approach to museum exhibit development from the initial planning and through design and fabrication. This process invited meaningful collaboration with indigenous and African communities and resulted in a big idea that strengthened our culture. Our collaboration on this project quickly became less of a question of whether we should participate, but rather, our participation was required. We saw the importance of the work and the unique story that we became excited to share.

It shouldn't come as a surprise that Native Americans have a fraught relationship with Museums and other institutions that have collected and interpreted our belongings and remains.

Too often, our existence as Indigenous people of the Dawnland is portrayed in a historical context. Too often, our image and voice are interpreted by European scholars in a way that lacks context. It's a process that perpetuates harmful stereotypes while failing to shed light on the evolution of our existence since interruption over 400 years ago. It's resulted in a flawed narrative that assumes our value can only be measured against our ancestors' support to the colonizers.

With that history in mind, we were anxious to change the narrative and move forward better. The *Entwined* exhibit provided us with that opportunity. We worked together to develop a big idea that celebrates the survival of culture

over thousands of years. It's a profoundly simple message, and it is precisely what we have been asking Museums to do for generations. It's a big idea that allowed us to share with the public history from creation through periods of interruption and trauma under an umbrella of culture surviving today. The use of contemporary artists to highlight the celebration and preservation of culture is beautiful.

We now have a narrative that has reframed our history without traveling through a timeline, allowed us to explore trauma without a tragic end, and challenged misconceptions that disconnect the past from the present. As indigenous people, we are embedded with the history of our ancestors and live in communities that continue to bear the marks of past events. For us, the past is present.

The poetic phrase, "they tried to bury us; they didn't know we were seeds," was a reoccurring element that grounded our work and focused our energy as the exhibit took shape. This exhibit now serves as the water for those seeds; allowing those voices that were once silenced to rise again. It allows us to find common understanding and a brighter future.

Our cultures are thriving today because of our ancestors' strength and despite the continuous and evolving forces of colonization that attempted to remove them from existence. We are still here, and this exhibit shares how beautiful it is that we remain.

Too often, our existence as Indigenous people of the Dawnland is portrayed in a historical context.



CANOE. SOVEREIGNTY AND FREEDOM



FROM TOP DOWN: Gary Carter, Jr. (Mashantucket Pequot), Sika Foyer (Togolese), and Hartman Deetz (Mashpee Wampanoag) constructing a muhshoon (Pequot)/aklo (Togolese), or, dugout canoe using the Dawnland and West African traditional method of burning out a whole log with fire to create the canoe.

By Sika Foyer (Edi Friedlander), Togolese

The tradition is to make the dugout canoe. But it is a vehicle, a way of doing commerce and while doing commerce you are building the community and you are building families. It is a vehicle for fisheries. On a canoe, a father teaches children a skill set through his actions and while he is storytelling. You fish and you take your fish to the market. You have food on the table. When you see the canoe today, it's the same story. "I build it so I can have the autonomy to do whatever I want. It's a cultural legacy I want to leave for my children, and their children, and their children's children."

For this project, we thought, "How do we design the canoe to reflect that freedom?" The symbols are of Native American and African spiritual geometry. It's like using mathematics to talk about something important. We have stars, we have upside-down "V"s, we have a rhombus, we have arrows. We took these images to combine our legacies and what we want to tell the next generations.

When we designed the canoe, we decided to put more information on the bottom than on the outside. In my work, what is visible and what is not visible is really, really important. Through storytelling, I was told that what is obvious is not always true. You want to seek what is not in front of you. If you are showing me something, I want to know what you are *not* showing me. So, at the bottom we decided to put more information and at the exhibition, only the inner circle people, or the initiated will know what is at the bottom. And in a way, we are keeping our secret to ourselves. There are so many things about Native Americans and Africans that are so innate to us, that no matter what is happening in today's world, nobody can take that from us. They don't know it. It's secret. It's sacred. And it's hidden. They cannot see it. If they see

it, they will ravage it and destroy us. Those things are so buried inside that only the initiated within that circle know about it.

So, at the bottom, we have an arrow. The symbol of the arrow is direction, but it is also a weapon of protection, not necessarily to destroy. It is something that says, “I am capable of protecting myself. I am capable of defending myself.”

We have four stars. The number four is very important in my culture and also in Native American culture. You have the four directions, the four seasons and the four colors – yellow, red and white and instead of black, we used indigo to have a deep blue.

You have the four elements – you have water, the fire, the wood is related to the earth, and you have wind. Without wind you don’t have fire.

And it was four artists that came together to do this. Something is buried within us that we want to protect, which is the sovereignty that we hold onto tightly to build our communities, our families and to build the future.

*Something is buried within us
that we want to protect,
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Muhshoon/Aklo, 2023
SIKA FOYER, ALVIN ASHIATEY, HARTMAN DEETZ, AND GARY CARTER JR.
Wood, acrylic paint
MYSTIC SEAPORT MUSEUM



Fire Basket/Fishing Brazier, 19th century
MAKER ONCE KNOWN, CHIPPEWA
Iron

This 19th-century Chippewa canoe torch is crafted of iron to be mounted at the bow of a vessel and emblazoned both to attract fish to the light and to illuminate them making them easy targets of the spear or nets.

THE MASHANTUCKET PEQUOT MUSEUM AND RESEARCH CENTER, MASHANTUCKET, CT

Aklokpakpa
(Togolese, “carving a canoe”)

Descendants of Africa brought their maritime skills with them to the Americas. Throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, aklo (dugout canoes, Togolese) were used for fishing, maintaining community connections and trade along the coasts and rivers. They were also used for naval battles and long-distance travel – the river system on the continent spans from the west coast to the Sudan and there was a distinction between those who used canoes to travel the open seas and those who navigated rivers and canoes. Early Portuguese accounts describe Senegalese fishermen far out at sea. West African canoes were quite large and could carry up to 120 men, had cooking hearths, storage, and contained forecastles. Some were also recorded as having sails. They were created by burning out the center of the tree to create the vessel as well as to shape the bow and stern from the outside with men tending to the fire day and night until the process was done.

Muhshoonash
(Pequot, “carving a canoe”)

In the Dawnland the rivers and coastal waters were critical arteries between villages and fishing and whaling resources for the People. They navigated these waters using the muhshoon. It is a watercraft built from the hollowing of a felled tree. Traditionally men would locate a tree of significant height and girth and would use both fire and stone axes at the base of it to bring the tree down. Once felled, the process of burning out the center of the tree to create the vessel as well as to shape the bow and stern from the outside would begin, with men tending to the fire day and night until the process was done. Depending on the length of the tree it might take days to a week or more.

Fishing Decoys, 20th century

MAKER ONCE KNOWN, MI’KMAQ
Wood, paint, metal

Indigenous people have used fishing decoys for thousands of years. Indigenous people often carved decoys out of wood, bone, or antlers. The decoy would be placed on the ice to attract fish.

THE MASHANTUCKET PEQUOT MUSEUM AND RESEARCH CENTER, MASHANTUCKET, CT



SPIRITUALITY: AN EXHIBITION IN HONOR OF OUR ANCESTORS

By Akeia de Barros Gomes,
Mystic Seaport Museum

I am an anthropologist, archaeologist, and social historian – so I naturally have an “academic” perspective on all of this. As a Black scholar and a woman of my matriline though, this work is never about my individual curiosity or career advancement. It is work that is done in honor of my ancestors whom I thank and seek guidance from every day in an attempt to try to tell their stories the way their stories always should have been told. This is, first and foremost an act of reciprocity and gratitude for all I have been given. As many of us, my ancestral relationship with the Atlantic is complex. Some ancestors crossed the Atlantic voluntarily as Cape Verdean migrants, some crossed in chains over the brutal Middle Passage as enslaved men and women...a good number of my ancestors were white enslavers. I have walked through The Door of No Return at Cape Coast Castle in Ghana and had the power to do something my ancestors didn’t when I turned around and walked right back onto African soil.

The pain of our Africanness being fragmented via the Middle Passage was in many ways the social death of the African over the Atlantic and the birth of something else.

As a person who has experienced, participated in, and believes in the foundational wisdom of African spirituality, my perspective on the ocean is that it is sacred, it is a home, it is birth, and is death – and it must be all of those things at once. The ocean is feminine energy. But, there is an “imperfectness” to and fragmentation of African identity in the Afro Atlantic diaspora. The pain of our Africanness being fragmented via the Middle Passage was in many ways the social death of the African over the Atlantic and the birth of something else. But there is even spiritual comfort in this because as time cycles, every death is a rebirth and every trauma births its own healing.

I am in the field of maritime history and I make sure in every conversation, interaction, and presentation to reiterate that when we are telling African and Dawnland (New England) maritime history, if we truly want to tell those histories through Black and Indigenous perspectives, we have to recognize and honor the spiritual as present and contemporary. We must honor ancestors as present and active. Otherwise we are not really incorporating the full range – of African and Indigenous voices into maritime history – at best we are telling still-colonized versions of these histories and much is lost. My ancestors wouldn’t want their histories told that way.

I hope they (the ancestors of all community members involved in this exhibition) accept the work, love, and care put into telling these stories and shaping this exhibition in their honor.



Staff with a Figure Representing the Divinity Eshu, after 1959

MAKER ONCE KNOWN

Wood, hide, glass beads, fiber, metal coins, and cowrie shells

The divinity Eshu (Esu, Elegua and other names throughout the diaspora) is important throughout West African cultures. He is a messenger of the Creator, is said to walk along beaches, and has maritime associations. He sits at the crossroads of happiness/joy and sorrow and hopelessness. In the Dawnland, early enslaved Africans and their descendants likely called on Eshu for guidance and justice. Unable to create figures like this one for fear of punishment, they had to be creative and secretive in making materials and offering prayers to Eshu.

YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY CHARLES B. BENENSON, B.A. 1933, COLLECTION



Mask Surmounted by a Figure of Mami Wata, 20th century

MAKER

ONCE KNOWN
Wood, textile, cardboard, paint, nails, and metallic thread

Masks such as this one featuring Mami Wata are important components of public celebration, prayer, and honoring of ancestors and Mami Wata throughout the African diaspora.

YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY CHARLES B. BENENSON, B.A. 1933, COLLECTION



Female Figure (Musokoro),
late 20th century

ABOU DIAKITÉ, GUINEAN

String, encrustation, animal hair, cotton thread, cloth, cowrie shells, bird's beak, leather, metal, and mirror

This contemporary piece reflects the world view and ritual practice that was carried across the Atlantic by those who were enslaved. This figure was created by a *basitigi*, or religious practitioner from a village in upper Guinea. This female figure reinforces the West African worldview that women are the foundation of everything. Like traditional nkisi figures utilized for reverence, to give gratitude or for prayer, this Musokoro contains symbolic natural elements as well as reflective metal and mirrors which can symbolize water or eyes/vision. Cowrie shells, which represent wealth, femininity, and the power of creation, are also embedded in the figure.

YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY BEQUEST OF PAUL F. WALTER



Creativity and Agency:
Maintaining African Spirituality

A nkisi (minkisi plural) is a religious belonging or figure made of various objects (such as shell, cloth, bone, and metal nails) and is associated with Yoruba and Bakongo spirituality. Minkisi are used in prayer, providing protection and healing. They are often buried or placed in secret domestic locations and are fiercely protected.

Enslaved African descendants lived in attics across New England. Multiple enslaved people, including Jenny, Dinah, Bristow and Cardardo lived in the attic space of the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House in Newport, RI, the oldest surviving home in the city. The discovery of a nkisi bundle under the attic floorboards of the home in 2005 provides insight into the lives of the enslaved and the creative maintenance of their African spirituality within a conversion to Christianity.

This nkisi bundle is the only one that has ever been identified in the Dawnland. But, we shouldn't assume that their use wasn't widespread as enslaved African descendants continued to call on ancestors, feel connected to Africa, and seek justice even as they were Christianized. Jinny Cole, who was enslaved by the minister of Deerfield was documented as gathering all kinds of "odds and ends" in preparation for "crossing the waters" (death) and returning to Africa. This was likely a nkisi bundle. Jinny passed on her spirituality to her son Cato. It was discovered upon his death that Cato gathered "trinkets" to provide for his own crossing.

Nkisi Bundle,
second half of 18th century

MAKER ONCE KNOWN, PROBABLY
CARDARDO WANTON

Three fabric fragments, 1 large section and 2 smaller pieces; 1 human molar (not shown); 3 fragments of Chinese import ceramics; 3 beads, 1 reddish brown, one white with blue line, 1 turquoise; 3 wooden buttons; 1 worked cowrie shell; 2 fragments of eggshell; 1 length of cord; 2 full shells; 7 shell fragments; 29 iron pins; and 15 glass shards

The discovery of this nkisi bundle under the attic floorboards of the home in 2005 provides insight into the lives of the enslaved and the creative maintenance of their African spirituality within a conversion to Christianity.

NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Constellation Wampum Belt, 2023

ELIZABETH JAMES-PERRY, AQUINNAH WAMPAOAG

Quahog shell beads, milkweed

Purple and white shell beads are arranged in this woven piece to feature the Bear constellation in a contemporary Aquinnah Wampanoag celebration of the connection between Earth and Sky.

COLLECTION OF ELIZABETH JAMES-PERRY

NEEKÔNHUCHEEK: RECLAMATION AND REMATRIATION

By Brad Musquantamôsq Lopes,
Aqunahunut Wôpanâak/Aquinnah Wampanoag

Stories Told By Windows, Not Mirrors

When I was younger, I never read a book or watched a movie that had positive portrayals of people who looked and felt like me; Wampanoag people, indigenous to the Dawnland and the continent now known as North America. In fact, rarely did I see any depictions or narratives of indigenous people as I navigated through colonial-centered classrooms. Those that I did find were often negative, romanticized, and were often written by non-Native authors. I found myself looking through windows, at myself, as others wrote and spoke about me, without the ability to narrate or even consent for myself. I felt trapped.

What I needed was a mirror, not a window. I needed to hear from and learn from other human beings who I could relate to, who I could see myself in and who would understand me. This is often the case for indigenous students in classrooms across the settler-colonial entity known as the United States. In many cases the literature used to teach indigenous content is not authored by indigenous people, further alienating indigenous students and staff members and creating further gaps of understanding for non-indigenous students and staff. The removal of agency and the substitution of voices has long been an issue in anthropology, archaeology, and other fields; and this is true for the general field of education as well. It is key that we seek out opportunities for mirrors and critically analyze the use of windows as we continue to explore colonial narratives in new and unique ways, and bring this education to all students.

Ahkee

To be Wôpanâak, is to be of the land and waterways. In our language, the word for land, ahkee, is an inalienable noun, which means it cannot be separated from our sense of self, our soul. The land is me, and I am a part of the land. Therefore, we feel every aspect of its wellbeing, as it is a part of our wellbeing. The profound sense of being connected to something much larger than yourself or your community, the land and its waterways, is something that

has reminded me of our responsibilities to our homelands since time immemorial.

In many ways, each and every one of us has felt the tremendous and horrifying stories these lands and waterways have seen, the result of which frequently ends up in archival libraries, public and private collections, schools, and exhibits spaces. We have felt the loss and theft of lands by Calvinist Puritans, Henry Dawes and his group of supporters, and most recently the flood of wealthy landowners to our homelands. We have felt the blood curdling that occurs when our ancestors were dug up in 1620 upon the arrival of the famed “Pilgrims,” when they were excavated to make way for farmlands and towns, and how many of those same ancestors still sit, alone in the archival spaces of institutions that claim to have our best interests in mind. We know the pain that comes from watching our beloved homelands and the creations that came from it be ripped away without choice. We know that pain all too well.

The creations that extended outside of our being and were crafted by our ancestors often lay in spaces we have no agency or control over, as divorced from us as we are from them. It reminds me of a gentleman I had seen recently from Nigeria, who commented on the absurdity of a cultural reality when one comes from a place impacted by settler colonialism; to witness a glory of his ancestors, the Benin Bronzes, he would need to leave his home, where they were created, and visit them at the British Museum, where they have been held captive since 1897. What of his children? Will they be forced to do the same? Or will these creations finally be returned home?

Rematriation of Belongings to the Land of Our Mothers

At one point in time the creations of our homelands were taken away from us, often collected by anthropologists and ‘other friends’ as Vine Deloria, Jr. used to say. In this process they were natally alienated; they were divorced from a part of themselves, a part of their very birth, and by removing them, their soul has been alienated. Yes, these things often deemed simply as ‘objects’ have souls in the Wampanoag worldview. From the clay underneath our feet to the rocks that silently watch the movement of the stars in the night sky, we believe that human beings are far from alone in occupying the spiritual aspects of the world around us. This includes our creations, and the delicate cultural protocols and beliefs that surround them, protocols and beliefs that are sometimes not followed, unknown, or impossible to follow in other locations. But, what does it mean to bring these creations home, back to the land of their creation, if possible?

It would mean the reconnection of an umbilical cord that was never intended to be cut. It would mean a return to its mother, her land and her people. For the very object itself, it would no longer sing out in desperate pleas to return home. For the people, it constitutes a healing of the soul and an opportunity to further understand ourselves and our ancestors. By returning objects and remains to their homes they can finally be put to rest and be able to join our ancestors in the next life. To rematriate, to return things once stolen to their mother, is the bare minimum that needs to happen for tribal nations to consider ever building trust toward institutions, states, and the Federal Government. It is up to the agency of tribal nations and communities how these creations should be handled and for whom they are accessible to. The era of our ceremonial artifacts being hidden behind archival doors is coming to an end.

Reclamation of Narratives to Heal the Waterways

A name said one too many times in colonial New England narratives is Puritan missionary, John Eliot. Coming to the region with a fervent desire to convert the indigenous population and to accomplish Massachusetts Bay Colony’s mission to “save” us, Eliot is often remembered for his efforts to produce Biblical texts in Algonquian scripts, largely Nipmuc and Wôpanâak. Even Edward Winslow, the ever so famous Pilgrim in American mythos who wrote about the beliefs of the Wampanoag people he interacted with, would go on to admire the work of John Eliot and

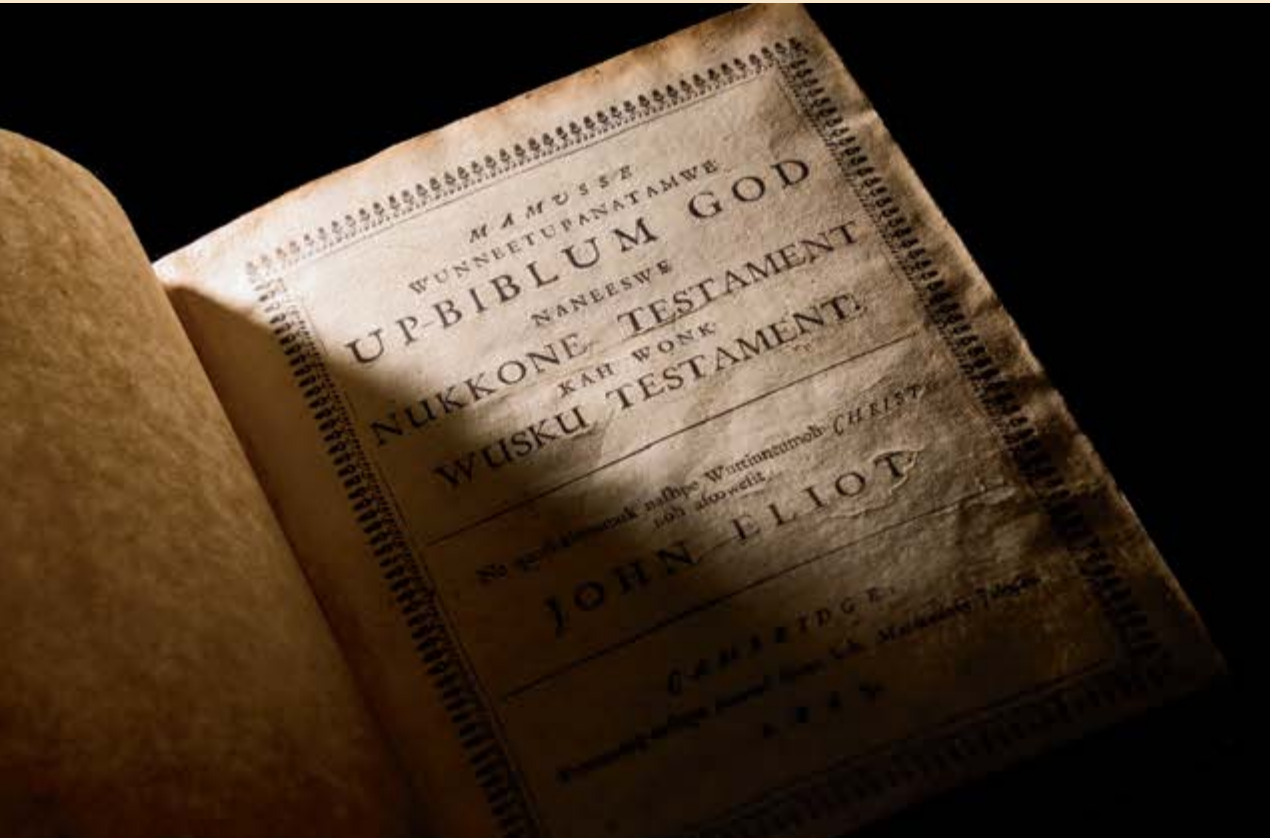
*We know the pain that comes
from watching our beloved
homelands and the creations
that came from it be ripped
away without choice.*

**First Edition Eliot Bible,
New and Old Testament,
1663 (rebound in 1847)**

PUBLISHED BY SAMUEL GREEN,
CAMBRIDGE, MA

Shown is a page from a rare copy of the 1663 bible representing Chapter 36 of the first translation of a Christian bible into an indigenous language. Prepared by English Puritan John Eliot by translating the Geneva bible into an Algonquian language.

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RESEARCH CENTER, MASHANTUCKET, CT



the other missionary workers, as bringing the gospel to the “savages,” something he and William Bradford were unable to do with their minimal resources in the midst of the Dawnland. By the 1640’s and certainly by the establishment of praying towns in the 1650’s, the resources were in place to create new narratives about the region, its people, and why, as Increase Mather often rambled on about, we as indigenous people were ultimately doomed as a people.

By the conclusion of the events often known as King Philip’s War (an interesting name for a defensive campaign against aggressive settlers), a narrative was already in place to explain and justify genocidal actions. This narrative slowly, but surely, became a part of a larger colonial fabric that would spread from Casco Bay to Savannah, reinforced and empowered by the ideologies that emerged out of the American Revolution and became ingrained into the earliest forms of the U.S. education system. To be like Rome, the United States has always sought to establish a narrative tradition of the like. But, what if your narrative tradition is compounded with lies, single stories, and genocide acceptance?

This is where the need and support for Native folks reclaiming narratives and providing complete pictures on stories comes into play. These stories need to be told by our people. They need to be carried by those of us who will move on to become ancestors one day. Historically told by others, it our time now to write our own histories, share our interpretations on classical narratives in the American mythos, and to have our agency and voices be heard for both our silenced ancestors to hear in the past and our unborn grandchildren to hold onto when they navigate the future.

One example of this recently is the work and efforts of Kimberly Toney (Nipmuc) at the John Carter Brown Library. Determined to reclaim colonial spaces and narratives, Toney has done key work on the Algonquin Bible, sometimes called the Eliot Bible, and centering the voices and agency of the indigenous people who actually did the work that Eliot became famous for. By highlighting the Native labor and spirituality that went into such a task, her work is challenging others to reinterpret and revisit traditional interpretations of colonial narratives. This one act alone is key to the spirit and souls of those Native folks, like James Printer (Nipmuc) and Caleb Cheeshahteumuck (Wampanoag), amongst others, who put an essence of their being into these creations. This is what it means to decolonize, or indigenize, content. This is what it means to reclaim narratives and heal the waterways that connect us.

Colonialism, the on-going process that we still deal with on a day-to-day basis, benefits when BIPOC folks are unable to have our narratives written and shared with the world.

To tell a more complete story, these narratives need to be reclaimed and reauthored. The paranoia and fear inherent in settler colonialism needs to subside, as the same fear and paranoia that caused colonial agents to act with preemptive violence is still inherent in settler-indigenous relations today. There is no where this is more evident than the LandBack movement, where conversations about land returning to tribes often have to shift through the process of cognitive dissonance and the discomfort of that, combined with built-in remnants of colonial fear and paranoia, in an effort to get on the same page. The reality is a deep colonial psychological one; in these fears, the descendants of settlers often times jump right to the very mechanism that has allowed them to be on this land, genocide, and believe they will be “next” if they even encourage efforts such as LandBack.

Your Name Is Your Spirit: Agency and the Air We Breathe

On the eve of independence in 1962 from the British Crown, Trinidad and Tobago’s Prime Minister, Eric Williams, felt it was important that the citizens of his island nation would be able to learn about the history of the land, from one of their fellow citizens. He felt it was important and key that this history be told by the people and for the people, rather than their colonizers or folks outside the cultural framework necessary to complete such a task. The agency of the story remained in Trinidadian and Tobagian hands, where it can be told with utmost reality and truth.

As we move forward, it is time for BIPOC-centered narratives to emerge, become celebrated and centered, and forever be a part of the narrative fabric. It is time that traditional, colonial and non-colonial narratives be challenged, reinterpreted, and enriched with the understanding that there are many ways of knowing, remembering, and telling about something. Finally, it is time that our ancestors, the ancestors of others unfairly disturbed, and their creations, be allowed to rest and return home.

Unâch.

RECLAIMING OUR FREEDOM, SOVEREIGNTY, AND THE SEA

The Other Side of the Harbor, 2013

ALISON WELLS
Mixed media, acrylic, paper, and photo montage on canvas

This contemporary reflection of the Underground Railroad in the free state whaling city of New Bedford features news clippings and other references of significant African American influences including the 54th regiment of the Civil War and Fredrick Douglas.

NEW BEDFORD WHALING MUSEUM



Dialogues in The Diaspora, 2016

CHRISTIAN GONÇALVES
Plaster, graphite

This work is inspired by the journey of the ancestors of the artist and represents two great-grandfathers and a grandfather who made their living on the sea.

COLLECTION OF CHRISTIAN GONÇALVES



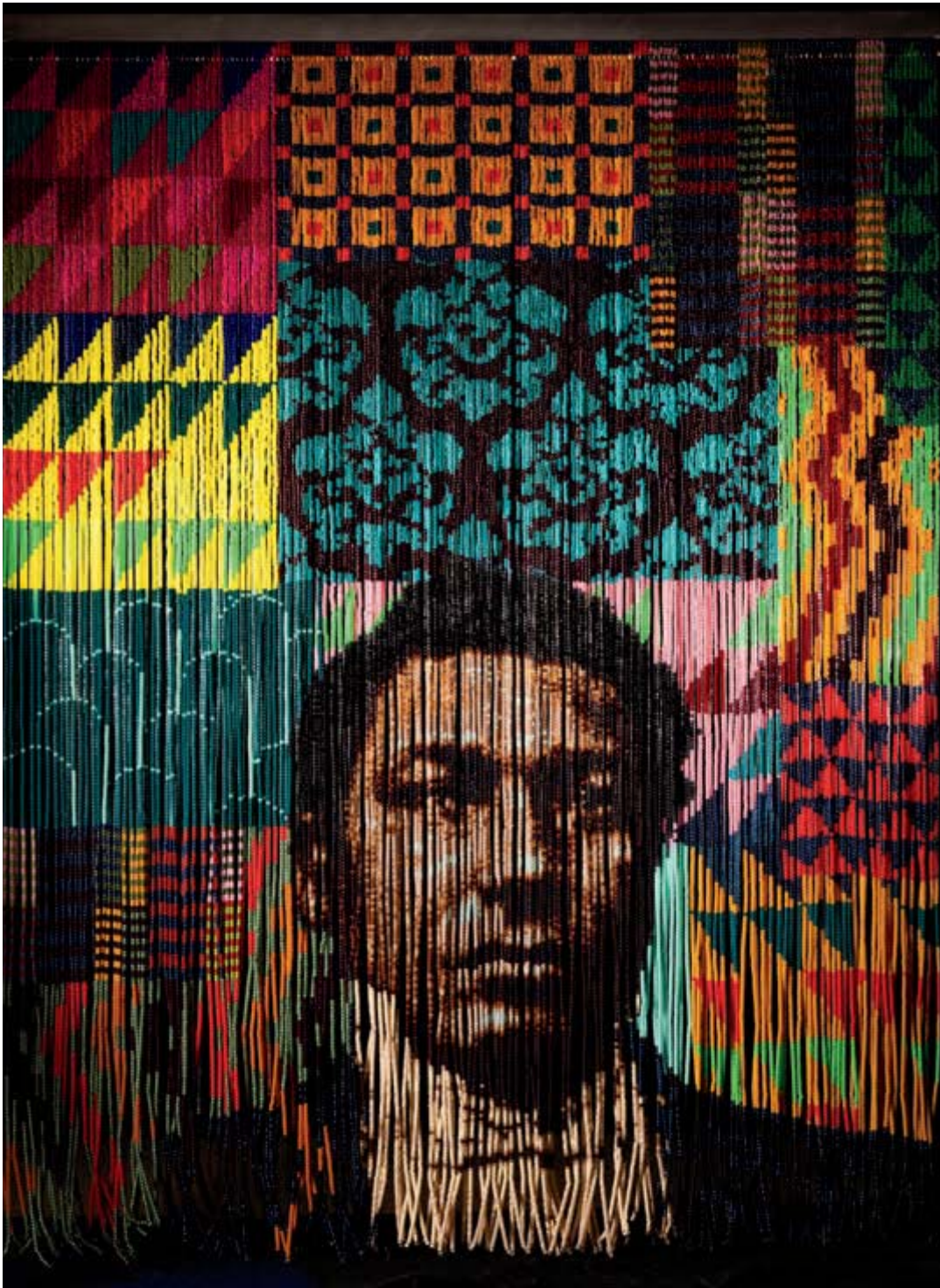
Wail on Whalers, a portrait of Amos Haskins, 2024

FELANDUS THAMES

Hairbeads strung on coated wire from an aluminum rod

This work, homage to escaped slaves who found autonomy in whaling, incorporates materials linked to Indigenous and African cultures to portray Haskins who was an Aquinnah Wampanoag whaler who rose to the level of Captain. The motif references the quilt commonly associated with abolition and the Underground Railroad.

COLLECTION OF FELANDUS THAMES



Our Gifts, contemporary

GAIL "WHITE HAIR SMILING" ROKOTUIBAU, MASHANTUCKET PEQUOT

Sweet grass, wampum, grape vine, driftwood, corn, braided sweetgrass, sage, pinecones, quahog shells, tobacco, deer antler, turkey feathers.

The five baskets highlight Indigenous reciprocity.

THE MASHANTUCKET PEQUOT MUSEUM AND RESEARCH CENTER, MASHANTUCKET, CT

RESTOR(Y)ING INDIGENOUS COLLECTIONS

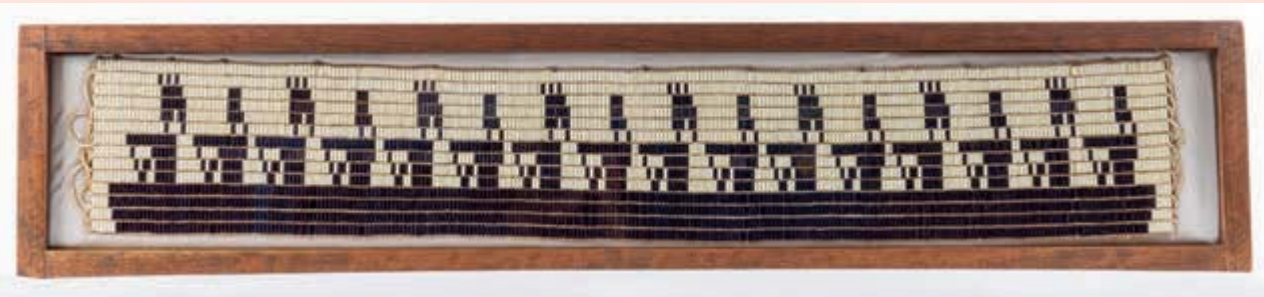
By Allyson LaForge,
Brown University

The exhibition *Restor(y)ing Indigenous Collections*, a companion exhibition to *Entwined: Freedom, Sovereignty, and the Sea* places historical baskets in relation with two contemporary Indigenous artists who work using long-standing basket-making methods: Julia Marden (Aquinnah Wampanoag) and Brittney Peauwe Wunnepog Walley (Nipmuc). In their twined basketry, these artists respond to the histories and themes of the woodsplint baskets that Mystic Seaport Museum stewards. Their artwork demonstrates the ongoing capacity for knowledge transmission through material culture in the present and future of the Native Northeast.



Traditional Sash

BRITTNEY PEAUWE
WUNNEPOG
WALLEY, NIPMUC
Hand-twined,
commercial hemp
fiber, commercial
Rit dye
COLLECTION OF
BRITTNEY PEAUWE
WUNNEPOG WALLEY



Different Footprints Part 3

BRITTNEY PEAUWE WUNNEPOG WALLEY, NIPMUC
Closed twined hand-woven, commercial hemp fiber

This basket is the third in the artist's *Different Footprints* series which showcases a combination of patterns and designs, symbolizing the beauty and power of different Peoples when they walk together.

COLLECTION OF BRITTNEY PEAUWE WUNNEPOG WALLEY

Willard's Tale

JULIA MARDEN, AQUINNAH WAMPANOAG
Round hand-woven twined bag, cotton cordage and commercial dye
COLLECTION OF
JULIA MARDEN



Seip Basket (River Basket)

BRITTNEY PEAUWE
WUNNEPOG
WALLEY, NIPMUC
Closed twined
hand-woven,
commercial hemp
fiber, commercial
Rit dye
COLLECTION OF
BRITTNEY PEAUWE
WUNNEPOG WALLEY

TOP

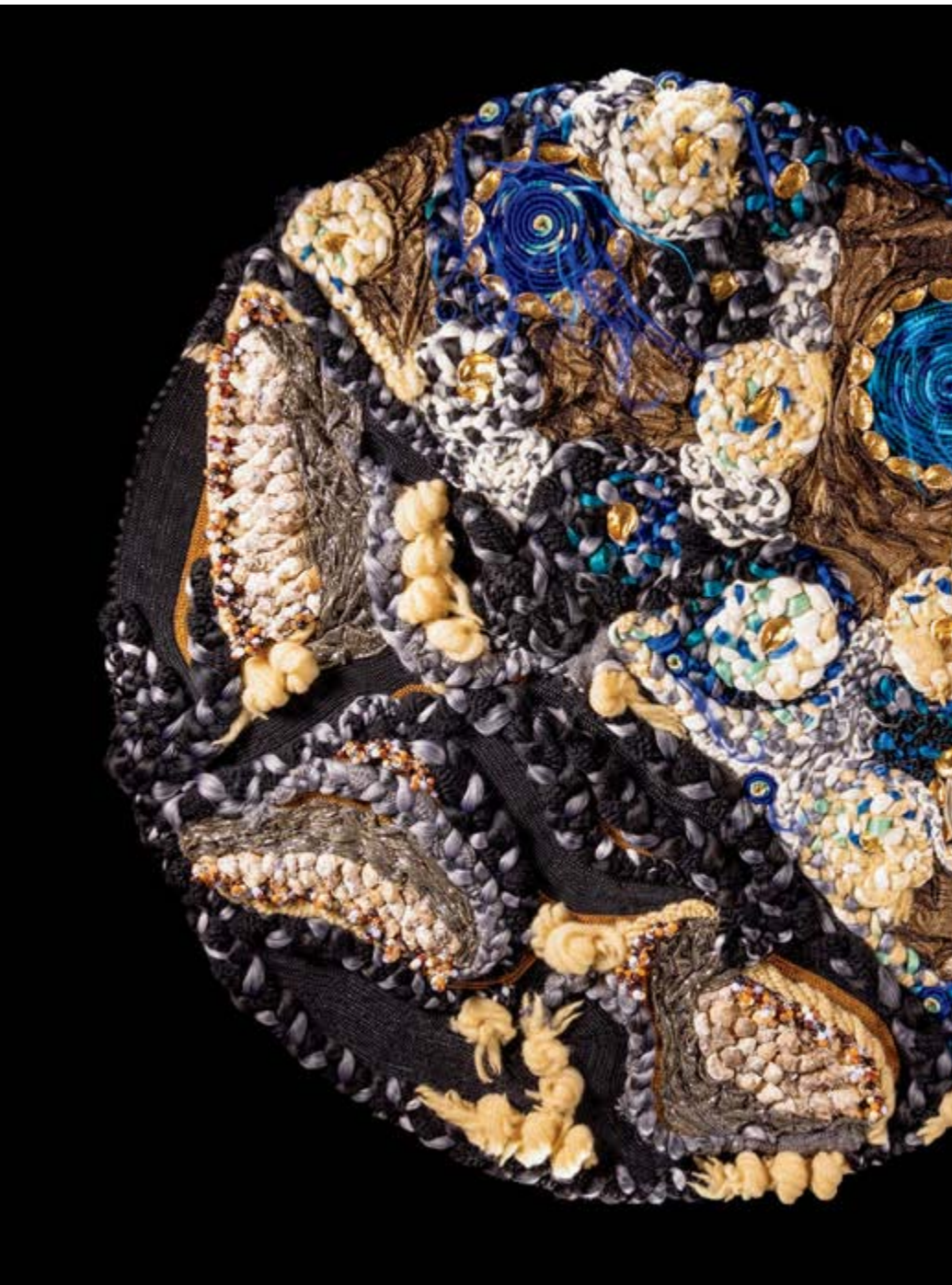
Maushop's Children

JULIA MARDEN,
AQUINNAH
WAMPANOAG
Round hand-woven
twined bag, cottage
cordage and
commercial dye
COLLECTION OF
JULIA MARDEN

BOTTOM

Water Travel

JULIA MARDEN,
AQUINNAH
WAMPANOAG
Hand-woven
wampum belt,
glass wampum
beads, brain-tanned
deer hide, and
synthetic sinew
COLLECTION OF
JULIA MARDEN



TideLine, 2023–2024

NAFIS M. WHITE

Hair, embodied knowledge, ancestral recall, audacity of survival, Swarovski crystals, the artist's seined gowns, hair baubles, gold gilded oyster shells, bobby pins

TideLine is a powerfully intuitive work that is a portal, a convergence of the Earth, the Celestial and the Water Worlds, Divinely directed and created in accordance as Spirit dictates, made from the artist's Ancestral lineage of both African and Victorian traditions of hair work, made in love and with resonant joy.

COLLECTION OF NAFIS M. WHITE AND CADE TOMPKINS PROJECTS



Drums from All Directions, 2023

SHERENTÉ MISHITASHIN HARRIS, NARRAGANSETT INDIAN TRIBE

Wood, deer skin, acrylic paint, sinew

Drums are used in ceremony, wahteaunk, by the Narragansett to express sacred knowledge. The artist created these drums to ensure that the People remember to dream as the ancestors did when the two and four legged spoke the same language. The spirits of each of these drums is intended to bring the People in accordance with their thoughts, emotions, senses, and reflective instincts.

COLLECTION OF SHERENTÉ MISHITASHIN HARRIS

The Rainbow Regalia, 2016

SHERENTÉ MISHITASHIN HARRIS AND MADE POSSIBLE WITH THE COLLABORATION OF SHERENTÉ'S FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

Fabric including satin, ribbons, bias tape, sequins, beads, paint, and sundry hand-me-down materials remade into new and spectacular splendor

This traditional dance regalia is inspired by the strength, resilience, and brilliance of the two-spirit dancer.

COLLECTION OF SHERENTÉ MISHITASHIN HARRIS





She Sings the Old Songs, 2024

SIERRA AUTUMN HENRIES, CHAUBUNAGUNGAMAUG NIPMUC
Free-hand cutting work and pyrography on birch bark with hand-shaped wampum shell discs and over six feet of hand-braided sinew

Humpback Whales carry songs that are many generations old. When a new whale is born, they are taught the song sung by the ones who came before them. Throughout their life, they add additional notes, contributing their story to the old song. And then, when a new whale is born, they are taught the song sung by the ones who came before them.

COLLECTION OF SIERRA AUTUMN HENRIES

Water Drum and Beaters, contemporary

TINA CHRISJOHN WYANT, ONEIDA
Deer skin, wood, water

Water drums are used by the People of the Dawnland as an individual percussion instrument and to facilitate dances. Water is added to the base of the drum. Deerskin is stretched over the top to create the drum surface and tightened when the outer ring is pressed down over it. The sound produced by tapping with the wooden beater is very high pitched. The water drum might accompany a song or call out to distant people or villages. While not on display in the exhibit, this drum is an important part of our Dawnland story.

THE MASHANTUCKET PEQUOT MUSEUM AND RESEARCH CENTER, MASHANTUCKET, CT



Acknowledgments

Entwined: Freedom, Sovereignty, and the Sea is generously funded by the Just Futures Initiative of the Mellon Foundation as part of the Reimagining New England Histories project.

Mystic Seaport Museum also gratefully acknowledges our project partners, Brown University and Williams College, and our community advisors whose collective voices, knowledge, creativity, and wisdom are foregrounded in this exhibition.

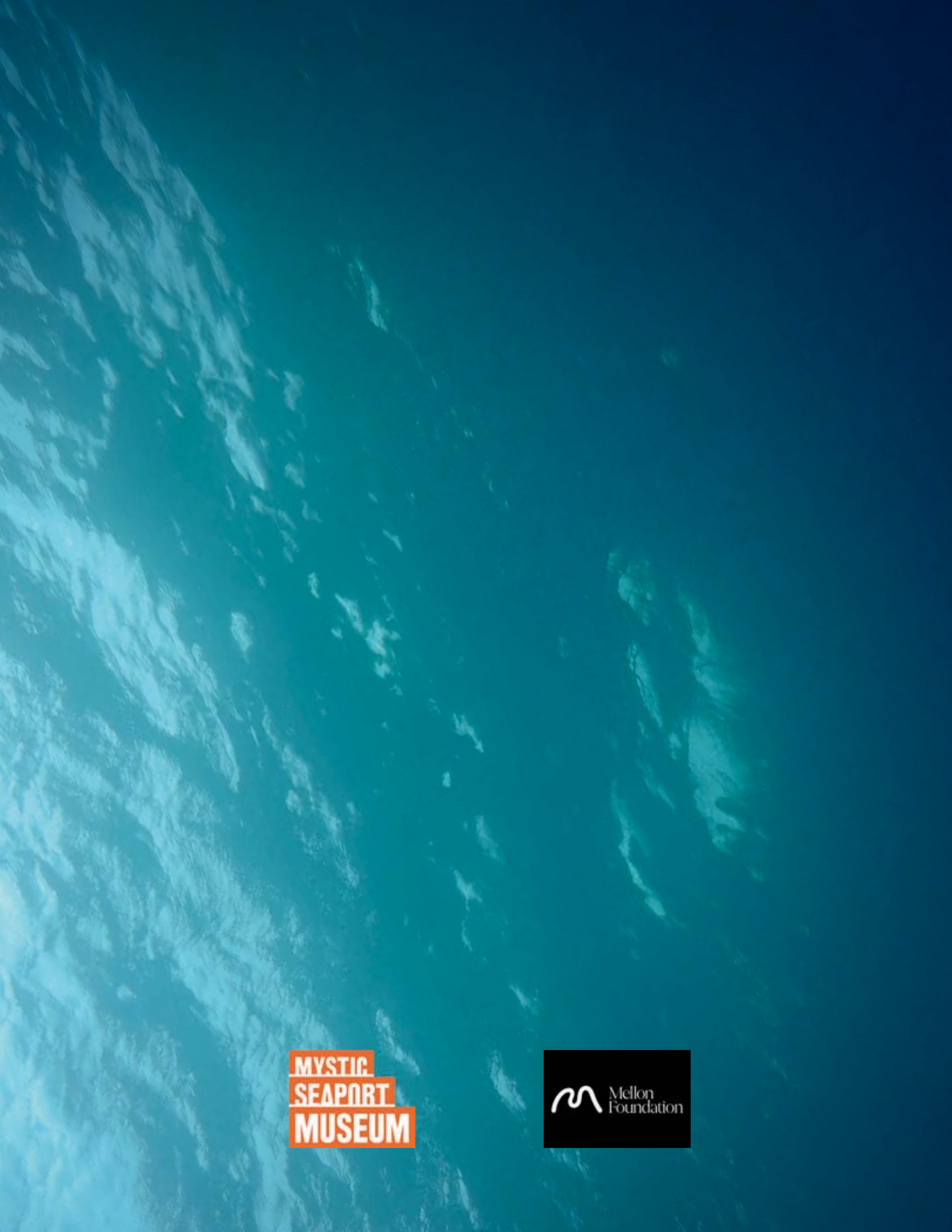
A special thanks to the exhibition committee members.

2021–2022
Richard “Soaring Bear” Cowes, Brad Lopes, Dr. Frances Jones-Sneed, Heather Bruegl, Jason Mancini, Leah Hopkins, Lorén Spears, Cheryll Holley, Nikki Turpin, Debbie Khadrui

2022–2023
Brad Lopes, Lorén Spears, Pilar Jefferson, Cheryll Holley, Leah Hopkins, Jason Mancini, Penny Gamble-Williams, Doreen Wade, Anika Lopes

Exhibition design and fabrication by SmokeSignals





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