

# Native American Representation and Authority at the Penn Museum

**Lucy Fowler Williams**, Associate Curator-in-Charge

American Section, Penn Museum, Philadelphia

Decolonizing Museums Conference Roundtable, October 23, 2021



# Collaborative Projects

- Facilitating NAGPRA, 1990...
- Objects of Everlasting Esteem: Native American Voices on Identity, Art, and Culture book project, 2003-2005
- Louis Shotridge Digital Archive, collections access project, 2007-2010
- *Post Indian Warriors: Creating A New consciousness in Native America*, film project, 2009-2011
- *Native American Voices: The People – Here and Now*, exhibition, 2014...
- Huna Tlingit – Penn Museum Partnership, MOU, 2018...
  - Envisioning a new Huna tribal museum, ongoing
  - *People of the Tides: Perpetuating Tlingit Culture and Resources*, place-based course in Alaska, Wharton Lauder Institute, August 2021



# Collaborative Project goals

- finding common ground
- building relationships
- amplifying indigenous concerns
- focusing on indigenous futures
- *perpetuation* not preservation
- shared responsibility
- shared authority



# Collaborative methods

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Kindness

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Nurturance

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Respect

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Time

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Trust

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Compensation



# OBJECTS OF EVERLASTING ESTEEM

edited by LUCY FOWLER WILLIAMS, WILLIAM WIERZBOWSKI, & ROBERT W. PREUCEL



*How are these objects meaningful to you and your community?*

60 Native specialists

Objects of Everlasting Esteem: Native American Voices on Identity, Art and Culture

Williams, Wierzbowski, and Preucel, editors

Penn Museum Press, 2005





What Concerns You Now?

Film project  
Post Indian Warriors:  
Creating A New  
Consciousness in Native  
America

Lucy Fowler Williams &  
Patty Talahongva  
2009-2011

Pueblo peoples, NM & AZ

Tlingit, Southeast Alaska

Nanticoke-Lenape, New Jersey

NAM Leaders, Washington, DC



# Native American Voices: The People - Here and Now

Penn Museum exhibition, 2014...





## Lead Exhibit Advisors

Tina Fragoso, Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape

Suzan Harjo, Cheyenne-Muscogee

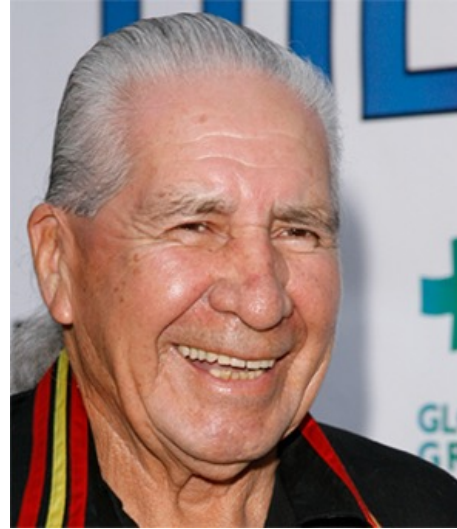
Patty Talahongva, Hopi

Teri Rofkar, Tlingit (1956-2016)

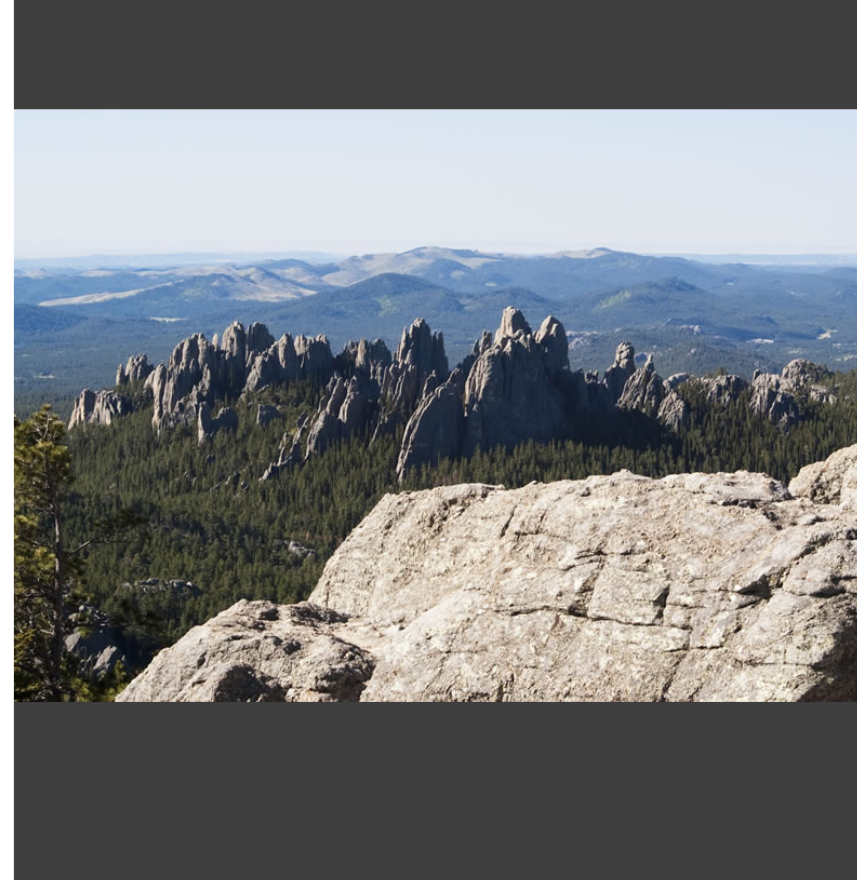




# highlights leading specialists challenging erasure







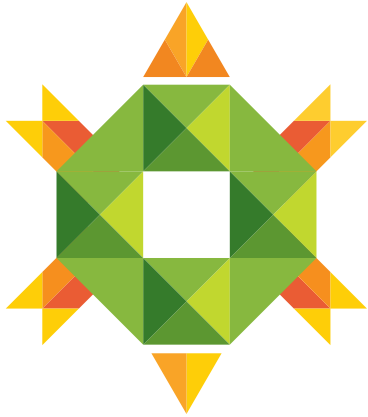
Sacred Places – protecting access and resources

# leading artists & language activists





# Exhibit Themes of Native Concern



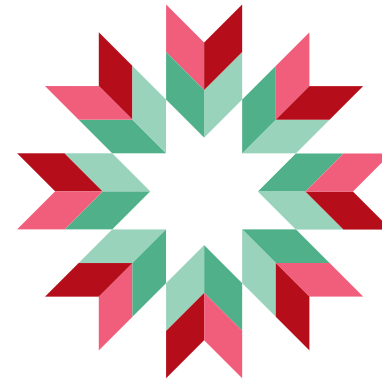
Local Nations  
Lenape/Delaware



New  
Initiatives &  
Activism

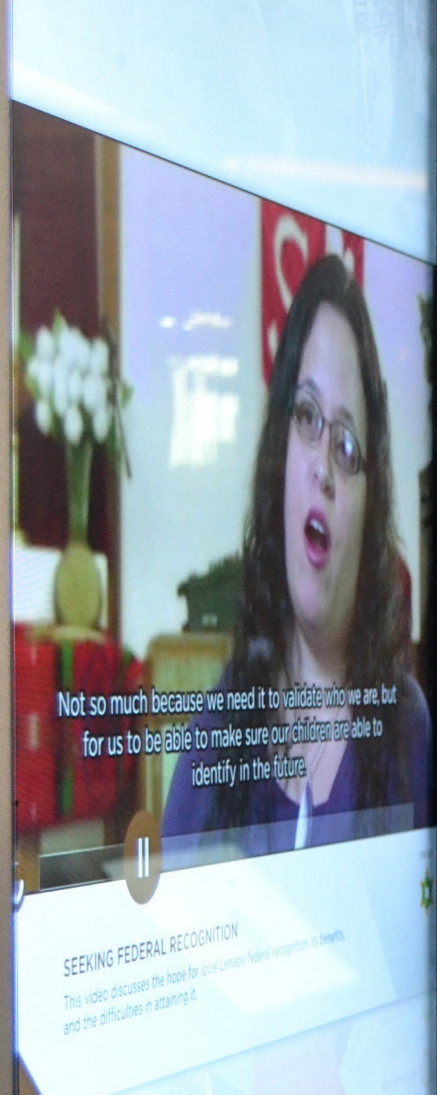


Sacred Places  
Hold Meaning



Celebrations  
Unite Communities





Not so much because we need it to validate who we are, but  
for us to be able to make sure our children are able to  
identify in the future.

#### SEEKING FEDERAL RECOGNITION

This video discusses the hope for local Lenape federal recognition, its benefits,  
and the difficulties in attaining it.

Video Voices representing today's concerns









FOCUS: SACRED PLACES  
Sacred places hold great meaning for Native Americans.

"They are more than just artifacts and  
they are more than just objects. They are  
the heart of their culture."

THEY ARE MORE THAN JUST ARTIFACTS  
THEY ARE THE HEART OF THEIR CULTURE

sharing American history of oppression



[illegible]





Old objects hold living histories & values



# New art shares today's concerns



## OUR LANGUAGE IS ENCODED WITHIN US

2021

*Mixed Media*

**Made by:** X'unei Lance Twitchell and  
Yéil Ya-Tseen Nicholas Galanin

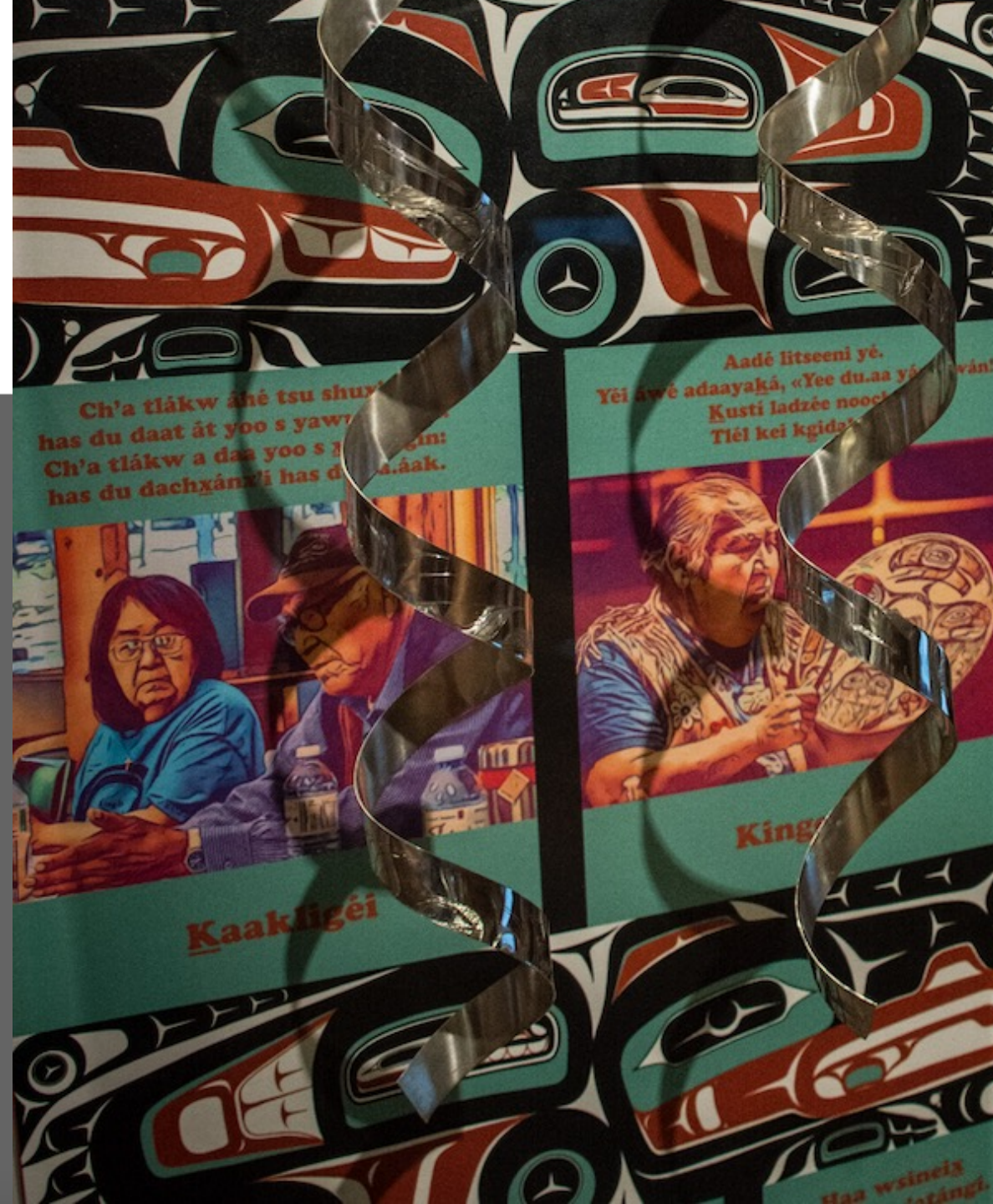
**Culture:** Tlingit/Haida/Yup'ik/Sami  
and Tlingit/Unangaġ, Alaska

"This collaboration is an homage to Tlingit language speakers, learners, ancestors, and future speakers. We have been told and believe that our language is encoded within us, is part of our DNA, but work is needed to avoid erasure caused by American genocide. Our ancestors and elders endured torture and hardship, and handed us a beautiful language that can heal us, but erasure is still possible if we do not find the courage to speak."

—X'unei Lance Twitchell

2013-16-1a through 2013-16-1e

Silver provided by First Nations Development Institute  
Photographs provided by Sealaska Heritage Institute, Sam Beebe/ECOTRUST,  
and Shak'shaani Eesh Konrad Frank

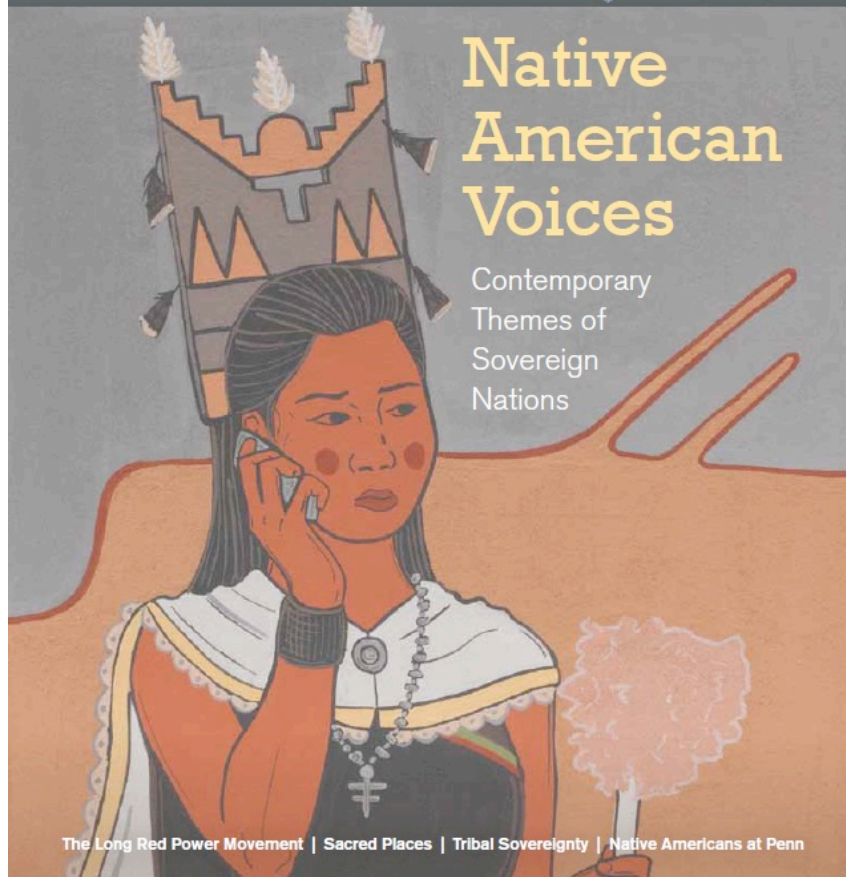




# Writing opportunities for Native colleagues

## EXPEDITION

THE MAGAZINE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY WINTER 2013 | VOLUME 55, NUMBER 3



WINTER 2013 | VOLUME 55, NUMBER 3

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**PENN MUSEUM**  
3260 South Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6324  
Telephone: 215.898.4000  
Website: [www.penn.museum](http://www.penn.museum)

**Hours**  
Tuesday–Sunday: 10:00 am to 5:00 pm  
Closed Mondays and major holidays.

**Admission**  
Penn Museum members: Free; Penn/Care holders (Penn faculty, staff, and students): Free; Active US military personnel with ID: Free; Adults: \$15.00; Seniors: \$12.00; Children (6–17) and students with ID: \$10.00

**Tours**  
Docents offer tours most Saturdays and Sundays at 1:30 pm. Check the Museum website for topics. Group discounts and docent-led tours are available for groups of 10 or more with reservations.

**Museum Library**  
Open to the general public with ID. Call 215.898.4021 for information and hours.

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**ON THE COVER:** *Miscommunication*, Jason Garcia (2012). Combining time honored Pueblo imagery with contemporary themes, this clay box shows Santa Clara Pueblo members chatting on their cell phones while celebrating the Feast of Saint Clare of Assisi. (Museum Object #2013-14-1)



# Making museum records accessible to tribes



## The Louis Shotridge Digital Archive

TLINGIT ART, CULTURE, AND HERITAGE



University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology

HOME | SEARCH | OBJECTS | PHOTOGRAPHS | DOCUMENTS

- Home
- About the Project
- Who Was Louis Shotridge?
  - Introduction
  - Biography
- The Collection
- Timeline of Events
- Map of Shotridge's Travels
- Sound Recordings
- The Tlingit People Today
- Shotridge and NAGPRA
- Shotridge's Publications
- Resources
  - Books
  - Web Sites
- Copyright & Permissions, Copies, Contact Us

*Gunalcheesh haat yeey.aadi Thank you for visiting the Louis Shotridge Digital Archive*





Objects



Photographs



Documents



Search

The Louis Shotridge Digital Archive makes available, for the first time, 4,000 high resolution digital images of Louis Shotridge's objects, papers, photographs, and sound recordings. The Penn Museum initiated this project in 2006, in response to the interest expressed by members of the Tlingit community who were striving to regain knowledge of their Tlingit history and heritage and to engage in conversations with the Penn Museum around the Shotridge collections.

We are pleased to make this collection available online in 2011. In so doing, we honor Louis's legacy and his expressed intention to preserve and promote Tlingit culture on a world stage where it can be studied and appreciated by all people in the years to come. Through this project, Louis Shotridge's collections, located in disparate archives, come together in one searchable database. It is now possible to read Louis's letters to Museum Director George Byron Gordon, to hear his sound recordings, to look at the photographs he took while in the field, and to see each of the objects he purchased from different Tlingit communities.

We hope this digital archive will inspire you to learn more about Tlingit and Native Alaskan history and that you will share your comments, suggestions and questions with us as you explore these remarkable records. We also hope that it will assist Tlingit people in their efforts of cultural revitalization.

- developed with Tribal specialists
- developed with Penn library
- supported by IMLS



# Huna Tlingit-Penn Museum Partnership mou 2018

- Supporting the development of a new Huna Tribal Museum







The Lauder Institute  
Wharton • Arts & Sciences  
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

# Huna Tlingit-Penn Museum Partnership



- Place based learning in Alaska
- 24 Penn students
- 15 Tlingit specialists
- August 2021

**Lauder Intercultural Venture 2021**

**People of the Tides: Perpetuating Tlingit Culture and  
Resources in Southeast Alaska**

**August 22–28, 2021**





Lucy Fowler Williams  
Associate Curator –in-Charge, American Section  
[wfowler@upenn.edu](mailto:wfowler@upenn.edu)