

The Work Arts and Crafts Do

Brian Hosmer, H.G. Barnard Chair of Western American History
The University of Tulsa

Abstract

This essay forms part of a suite of papers focused on work and belonging on the Wind River Reservation. This essay attempts to interrogate multiple meanings attached to work, by Native people and non-Indians, and across multiple work environments.

Keywords

Wind River Reservation, Native arts and crafts, arts and crafts as work

I'd wanted to interview Eva McAdams from the time I initiated my project on work and attitudes toward work on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming. McAdams was a member of the Eastern Shoshone Tribe who along with Northern Arapahos share this reservation located in west central Wyoming. By the time of my first introduction to Wind River, McAdams was among the community's most famous residents, known nationally and internationally for her stunningly intricate beadwork, typically featuring her interpretation of the iconic Shoshone Rose motif. Her works regularly commanded prices in the thousands of dollars. Named a National Heritage Fellow by the National Endowment for the Arts in 1996, an award that recognizes a lifetime of achievement, McAdams also was the first American Indian and second artist all time to receive a Wyoming Governor's Award. Displayed in fine arts galleries and on the persons of powwow dancers, McAdams' art bridges the multiple registers of Native Arts and Crafts—fine art, collectable crafts, dance regalia, and commerce.¹

I wanted to meet McAdams because I thought she might be able to help me with my ongoing project exploring work, and ideas about working in mid-twentieth century Native communities. Entitled 'working and belonging,' this project attempts to interrogate multiple meanings attached to work, by Native people and non-Indians, and across multiple work environments. My work is inspired by Dan Usner's *Indian Work* (2009), which

¹ National Endowment for the Arts, Lifetime Honors. '1996 National Heritage Fellow, Eva McAdams.' http://www.nea.gov/honors/heritage/fellows/fellow.php?id=1996_08&type=bio; Rena Delbridge, 'Getting a bead on her heritage Eva McAdams turned a craft she learned into an art,' *Made in Wyoming: Our Legacy of Success* <http://madeinwyoming.net/profiles/mcadams.php>

explores these issues in a compelling fashion, Alexandra Harmon's *Rich Indians* (2010), as well as a whole body of ethnohistories of economic change and Native culture, some of which are compelling studies by Jessica Cattelino (2008), Paige Raibmon (2005), and Colleen O'Neill (2005 & 2004). Scholarly studies of Indian Arts and Crafts are a bit outside my core interests, but I've benefited from groundbreaking work by Kathy M'Closky (2002), Erika Bsumek (2008), Clyde Ellis (2003), Brenda Child (2014), Jenny Tone-Pah-Hote (2013) and so many others.

Working and belonging contributes to these discussions by focusing not only on where and how native people work, but what they say about it. Work, it seems, can be understood as integrative and as alienating, as promoting individual achievement and interests and as oriented toward community. In this fashion, the practice of work, how it is organized, who works (and who doesn't) and how working (one's own and that of others) is described, speaks to the importance of laboring to community. To complicate further, assessments of working carry considerable weight in reservation contexts, where systemic characterizes conditions in some places, but where assumptions of an incongruity between Indians and working carry cultural connotations, as well as fiscal and economic.²

So, I wanted to speak with Eva McAdams and learn something of the significance of 'art work' for Wind River and Indian communities at mid century. I wanted to learn something about associations between art and crafts, as cultural and aesthetic expressions, and as sources of material remuneration. I'm curious about the work that arts and crafts 'do'—to producers and consumers, and for observers and academics. I wanted to think more deeply about relief programs and the development of arts work, and about efforts—led by Indians and non-Indians—to promote and market crafts. Can we see arts and crafts as a job, as a hobby, as an avocation, as relief work? Can we detect any sense of meaning from the context in which art is produced, by whom and for whom? Why does it matter if arts and crafts are produced for marketplaces rather than for friends and family members? How can working for art, or the production of tribal or cultural arts, be an instrument of community belonging? Do Indians who produce arts and crafts, or participate in crafts production, become connected to community in meaningful ways?

Mostly though, I wanted to hear a renowned artist reflect upon her own career. I wasn't disappointed.

'I think I must have started when I was about seven years old. My grandmother, Mary Washakie, taught me how.' One summer, she 'decided that I would learn how to bead work. And she sat me down, I was not allowed to go out and play with the

² This essay is one of a suite of papers on 'Working and Belonging, on Wind River,' that includes "'Dollar a Day and Glad to Have it': Work Relief on the Wind River Indian Reservation as Memory,' pp. 283-307 in *Native Pathways*; 'Working and Between-Ness, pp. 237-250 in James Joseph Buss and C. Joseph Genetin-Pilawa, eds., *Beyond Two Worlds: Critical Conversations on Language and Power in Native North America* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2014); 'The Wyoming Indian: Indian New Deal Political Art,' in Padraig Kirwan and David Stirrup, eds., *The Art of Resistance and Resurgence*, edited by, (Forthcoming: Routledge Press). In-progress essays look at 'Indian Work is Cooperative Work,' and farming and ranching associations and programs at mid-century.

other children. I wanted to. I was very active. But she insisted that I sit down and learn how to do bead work, which I didn't want to do. So I sat down and learned how to do the bead work; and she was a very strict teacher.'

On one occasion, young Eva found a way to speed up her work by tying her knots on the underside of moccasins. Forced to untie an entire string, Eva asked her grandmother for an explanation.

' "Because it snags the white ladies' stockings if they buy the moccasins," she remembered, And, 'I thought, well I could care less about the damn white ladies' stockings.'³

Upon some additional reflection McAdams offered this:

'I was much too young, I feel now, to start on something like that. . . .But it's something that I was glad—after I grew up and got married that I was glad that I did because that's the way we put a bean on the table.'

Put a bean on the table. This was an interesting phrase to me, particularly as it—or similar sentiments—dominated our discussions about bead work. Eva McAdams recalled that after she and her husband Alfred 'Dutch' McAdams acquired a piece of land, became small scale ranchers (something they did for decades) and started a family, 'we cleared sage brush and the rocks and had our little kids along. . . .and then I'd go in and tend to the family and then I'd sit up and sew until about two and doing necklaces and maybe little moccasins if I had the buckskin. And that was how we put the bean on the table because everything we got went back into the ranch. . . .Every time I sold something, I put a dollar or two away in a little fund so when school time came by we have enough money to buy school clothes and school supplies.' But still, even after winning awards, McAdams recalled

'I had no thanks in my heart for my grandmother teaching me that. . . .I had bitter feelings about the way I was taught. . . . So I had no thanks for her.'⁴
'I didn't like it; I didn't appreciate it. I guess it has really saved me and my family because that's how we were able to raise our little family was with the damn bead work.'⁵ 'I've had a hard life and the beadwork really helped.'

There is more to say about McAdams, who died in 2010 at the age of 82. But for now, I'd like to think about working for arts and crafts and the work that arts and crafts do—and what I think this may mean. Arts and crafts work is a complex phenomenon, operating as it did within and across a series of binaries: relief and enterprise, wage labor and cultural production, assimilation alongside self-determination, community and individuality. Arts and crafts represent work in that they are products of human labor that transform materials into objects of aesthetic and cultural value. These transformations are the work of muscle

³ Eva McAdams, interviewed by Brian Hosmer and Elaine Elliott, 18 August 2005. Transcript and recording in possession of author.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid

and sinew, eye and ear, hand and finger. But also of thought—arts and crafts are ideas made manifest. Sometimes, arts and crafts are work in the sense that ideas and ability are exchanged for other things of value, thus linking this work with labor performed in other contexts. Arts and crafts workers put that bean on the table. Work also holds cultural significance as in ‘sturdy work ethic’ and perhaps the inculcation of capitalist ethos, or as foundational to certain varieties of modernity. Thus invested with moral and ethical significance, work is understood to be foundational to individual character, essential to the health and functioning of community, society and nation.

Inculcating habits of work is also a form of work. In schools and churches, across and between empires, work ethic is promoted and valued. In this sense, work *can* be seen as socially and culturally integrative—as a means toward belonging and contributing—by promoting a sturdy work ethic among those presumed lacking in the same. In that sense, it is an instrument of colonialism carried out via the work of voluntary societies, groups, organizations and individuals. Finally, and just as inculcating work ethic is a form of work, so too does art perform work of its own. Arts and crafts do things, they act upon people in certain ways, and can be expected to do so. This means that the promotion and display of arts and crafts can be seen to act upon the craftsperson but also upon the broader society. Maybe this is what motivates me to think of working for art, working on art, working with art, and the work that arts and crafts perform.

I.

As it turns out, some of these basic principles had come into play just when Eva McAdams was learning her craft. Welfare agencies on Wind River employed her great aunt Eva Washakie as teacher, and then director, of various arts and crafts projects. In monthly school reports for September and October 1934, Visiting Teacher at Large Laura Dester reported on the work that relief performed for Arapaho and Shoshone women. It broke ‘down the barrier between the home and school,’⁶ she wrote, so that ‘the mothers [are now] showing an interest in school affairs.’ It promoted health and hygiene, a Girl Scout troop dubbed ‘Sacajawea,’ courses in typing, shorthand, and advice on breaking the cycle of debt to local traders. ‘The work for women is essential both economically and socially,’ Dester reported, ‘they need the money for the maintenance of their homes and they need an occupation to give them new interests. It is a well known fact that many of our Indian women spend their leisure time at the ‘games.’⁷

Arts and crafts work was central to relief efforts but fully integrated into broader agendas (O’Neill 2012). By the fall of 1934, Eva Washakie was tasked with reviving Shoshone beadwork designs assumed to be ‘almost lost.’ The next year, she became ‘Assistant and Teacher of Arts and Crafts at the government day school,’ and on a project now fortified

⁶ Laura Dester, Visiting Teacher at Large, ‘Monthly School Report for September 1934,’ NARA, RG 75, CCF, Shoshone, Box 3, File 00-34-032.

⁷ Laura Dester, Visiting Teacher at Large, ‘Monthly School Report for October 1934,’ RG 75, CCF, Shoshone, Box 3, File 63136-34-032; Laura Dester, Visiting Teacher at Large, ‘Monthly School Report for July 1935,’ NARA RG 75, CCF, Shoshone, Box 3, File 00-35-032.

with Federal Works Progress Administration (WPA) funds.⁸ By 1936, Eva and sister Elizabeth had emerged as the principals in a WPA sponsored tanning project where groups of women ‘skinned the deer and we have the meat in the storage to be used for relief families,’ with ‘hides. . . tanned by the women and buckskin garments. . . made in the WPA work room.’ The tanning project, Dester reported, ‘appeals to many of our older women,’ who ‘are making buckskin garments which will be agency property. The work certainly has had an appeal for the older women and at the same time is interesting young girls in learning how to tan hides and leather work.’⁹

These projects operated within a much broader context of relief work at Wind River that included conservation camps run by the Indian Emergency Conservation Work (Civilian Conservation Corps-Indian Division)¹⁰, agricultural cooperatives administered jointly through the Soil Conservation Service and Bureau of Indian Affairs, and various other building, educational and conservation projects. In most circumstances, relief encompassed multiple objectives, from mitigating the worst effects of dire poverty, to transforming reservation environments and including more ambitious efforts to leverage relief funds into economic activities of a more permanent nature. They were geared toward transforming bodies and minds, and focused, often, upon perceived capacities of Indian workers. Leo Cottonoir, Eastern Shoshone, embodied the perceived benefits of work relief in an essay entitled ‘What the IECW has done for the Indian,’ which earned an award. Cottonoir, a camp worker and the supervisor, reflected on ‘a new hold and outlook in life.’ The Indian worker, ‘has gained a new confidence. He has shown he can do good work and in turn our government has shown it is striving to help the Indian get ahead, to boost him where he shows he deserves it.’¹¹

But if relief was supposed to stimulate the mind by engaging the hands and eyes, WPA wages were low (\$40 per month), and Indian women workers were paid in kind, as often as in cash.¹² Dester recognized the potential problem where ‘any permanent plan for the future of young people on the reservation will have to include some training and employment for the girls [as] Riverton and Lander are small and have very little to offer for employment for girls’ other than the occasional and less desirable work as domestics.¹³ As if on cue, Eva Washakie resigned her first appointment as arts and crafts teacher after barely a month. Dester took it as a blow. ‘Eva Washakie’s resignation as Arts and Crafts Teacher, has been a serious occurrence this month. It has made us all feel we did not give Eva the cooperation, which she should have had. She came here young and enthusiastic and aspired to do much for her people. She wants to stay home for the remainder of the

⁸ Laura Dester, Visiting Teacher at Large, ‘Monthly School Report for October 1935, NARA RG 75, CCF, Shoshone, Box 3, File 3226-36-032.

⁹ Laura Dester, Visiting Teacher at Large, ‘Monthly School Report for February 1936. NARA, RG 75, CCF, Shoshone, Box 3, File 1149-37-032.

¹⁰ <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2016/summer/ccc-id.html>

¹¹ Leo Cottonoir, ‘What the IECW has done for the Indian,’ *The Tattler*, 15 February 1936. NARA, Rocky Mountain Branch. RG 75, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 79.

¹² Laura Dester, Visiting Teacher at Large, ‘Monthly School Report for November 1935, NARA RG 75, CCF, Shoshone, box 3, File 00-35-032.

¹³ Ibid.

year as she wants to help her parents build a larger house. Both Eva and her parents have been in to see me and I feel that Eva will continue to work here, but needs time to find herself. The family has had considerable trouble.’¹⁴

When she returned in 1935, it was to a more ambitious set of programs oriented around a sewing project transforming surplus material into curtains, bed spreads, and sheets, all to be used at the government hospital in Ft. Washakie, and dresses and slips made from Red Cross donations, distributed to women as a form of relief. By this time, projects reached into the schools because wrote Dester, ‘the primary motive is to develop a community project with local leaders.’ Under the direction of ‘a former Carlisle student. . . overseeing the sewing,’ the project now boasted ‘Shoshones and Arapahoes, full bloods and mixed bloods, all taking part in the work.’ Work exerted power. It overcame conflict between segments of the complex Wind River communities, and trained leaders. ‘Eva Washakie is doing very well in her work as Assistant and Teacher of Arts and Crafts at the government day school,’ read this report. ‘She is, however, the only Shoshone girl who holds any position of leadership.’ This concerned Dester who advised that ‘She should have college training,’ and in the margins ‘Why not her? She both needs & deserves it?’ ‘Sure does’ wrote a person identified only as ‘T.’¹⁵

There is little evidence that Eva Washakie attended college, or received the kind of training that might enable her to assume management of arts and crafts work. The work that relief did was of one type, but not another.

Reports of Women’s WPA projects offer insights into ways the *language of work* shaped conceptualizations of arts and crafts efforts (Usner 2009). When Henrietta K. Burton of the Extension Division visited Wind River in 1940, she observed a comprehensive set of projects that included sewing and hide tanning projects, training in domestic work, instruction on home making and food preparation, child care and general education, and a WPA mattress making project. Effects were noticeable—and highly gendered. While Indian men supposedly resented ‘the budgeting of time, money, and strength’ because ‘it interferes with their complacency and their ideas of leisure and enjoyment,’ women ‘seem to welcome the idea of working on plans that are definite.’ Wind River women ‘are interested in being busy with things they can do with their hands.’¹⁶ Many of these projects, like mattress making, had expressions on reservations other than Wind River (O’Neill 2005, & 2012, Hosmer 2004).

II.

The focus of work projects on Wind River band to shift in the late 1930s, and gradually—very gradually—came to differentiate between relief and rehabilitation on the one hand,

¹⁴ Laura Dester, Visiting Teacher at Large, ‘Monthly School Report for October 1934.’ RG 75, CCF, Shoshone, Box 3, Folder 63136-34-032.

¹⁵ Laura Dester, Visiting Teacher at Large, ‘Monthly School Report for December 1934. NARA RG 75, CCF, Shoshone, box 3, file 00-35-032.

¹⁶ Supervisor’s Field Report, Wind River Agency, Fort Washakie, Wyoming. February 12 to March 30, 1940. NARA RG 435, Entry 26, Box 9.

and arts and crafts on the other. The creation of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board in 1937 provided additional impetus for this change in direction by nurturing ‘traditional’ arts and crafts, for cultural purposes and sale (McLerran 2012; Schraeder 1983; Tone-Ha-Pote 2013). Finances also mattered. In April of 1941 State WPA administrator L.G. Flannery terminated Wind River’s sewing project. According to Eva M. Haas, Social Security Case Worker for Wind River, fully fifteen women, all heads of families, now ‘are left without means of support.’ Citing age restrictions limiting availability of social security, and limited funds under aid-to-dependent-children, Haas conceded desperation. ‘We are at a loss to know where to turn for help for these people.’¹⁷

Relief and crafts projects felt the pinch, but adjusted. By August, Anna Antelope and Mae Cleveland left one beading project to join the ‘eighteen women very busy making ticks for their mattresses,’ at the St. Stephens Mission factory.¹⁸ In November came word that Elizabeth Friday and Lena Brown had been transferred *to* the Costume Project, which made beaded buckskin uniforms for the government school’s Drum and Bugle Corp. Meanwhile, John Goggles, Ed Aragon, and Paul Hanway hung on to their jobs making bedsteads, and Lucille Friday, 18 years old on the 24th of that month, ‘is very eager to be assigned [*to any project*], as she is the sole wage-earner in a household containing two families of 10 persons in all.’¹⁹

Crafting seemed to hang on even as budget cuts undercut relief. Jessie Headley assumed a leadership position for the workshop at St. Michaels, and Pearl Posey, ‘very capable and educated beyond most of the women in her district’ moved to Arapahoe ‘where she will insist on high standards of workmanship.’ Mary Cleveland and Anna Agnes Antelope ‘were working at the mission in weaving,’ both having learned ‘to make baskets from the Sisters when they attended school there. It is planned that these women will assist at the Arapahoe center when the loom is received and they have become proficient in loom weaving.’ And that Costume Project ‘has such a large amount of work in store,’ that it would. . . seem desirable to transfer Beatrice Spoonhunter from Art to Costume’ and Mary Underwood ‘from Production to act as foreman of the Costume Project. Beatrice is a very fine bead worker, although not particularly talented,’ she wrote, ‘and will do splendid work on the costumes.’²⁰ Craft work, it seemed, had generated some staying power—and with that the opportunity to translate the labor of hands to the work of supervising others.

But by end of December 1941, even the band uniform project had collapsed, a victim of spending priorities shifted to wartime production. Stone reported ‘so much unrest and

¹⁷ Eva M. Haas, Jesse D. Schultz, Memorandum to Forrest R. Stone, Superintendent. 21 April 1941. NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 247.

¹⁸ Mrs. J.D. Schultz, Welfare Worker, to Marguerite Johnson, Supervisor, Welfare Project Section, 26 August 1941 NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 247.

¹⁹ Mrs. J.D. Schultz, Welfare Worker, to Marguerite Johnson, Supervisor, Welfare Project Section, 26 August 1941 NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 247.

²⁰ Ibid.

hysteria' and requested some assistance in 'keeping our people busy' if only via Red Cross work.²¹ In truth, action was already under way at Wind River. Some months earlier, and faced with 'a continuing need for employment for this group of women,' and having recently hired 'a Community Worker who has marked ability as a director of arts and crafts,' Stone proposed transforming the two sewing centers into arts and crafts facilities. 'It is my feeling,' he wrote, 'that in view of this set up, we might and probably should attempt a crafts project for twenty Indian women who will have need for such employment.' And as an added benefit, 'supervisory needs can be met' by Eva Haas and Bernice Brown [Arapaho], 'with. . .two Arapahoe women acting as leaders or instructors at each work center.'²²

This all coincided with the arrival of Jesse Donaldson Schultz on Wind River. Fresh from organizing a successful crafts cooperative on the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana, Schultz was the second—and much younger—wife of James Willard Schultz, the noted ethnographer, Indian enthusiast, and source for George Bird Grinnell's famous work on Blackfeet culture. Jessie Donaldson had been a teacher and student prior to meeting Schultz. By the mid-1930s their efforts to nurture a crafts cooperative had born fruit, and attracted the notice of Forrest Stone, then Superintendent at Blackfeet (Banks 1983).

Jessie Schultz worked to replicate her approach at Blackfeet soon after arriving on Wind River in 1940. Responsible for administering welfare programs including the mattress-making project, cooperative work, and arts and crafts, captured her attention and imagination.²³ In 1941, Schultz drafted an ambitious proposal for arts and crafts cooperatives on Wind River, which she forwarded to Stone. This initiative was designed to take advantage of a crafts project of longer standing, located at St. Michael's Episcopal Mission in Ethete, and managed by Sister Edith Adams. The St. Michael's project had been quite successful, nurturing Arapaho (and some Shoshone) crafts people, principally in beadwork, moccasins, and clothing of traditional design, some of which they sold on consignment from mission buildings or by other informal means. By 1941, Sister Edith had decided to exit the business, and turn production and distribution over to the Agency, probably because of Schultz' considerable experience. Her stock was valued at \$2,500, of which Sister Edith reserved the best items, assessed at \$500, for display, with the remainder to be sold on consignment.²⁴

Stone contacted H. G. Lockett, Principle of the Wind River Community Day School at Fort Washakie, proposing that Eva Halls and Sister Adams begin coordinating crafting effort already underway at this school and St. Michaels in Ethete. In this way, he nudged the groups together 'under the observation and guidance of Mrs. Schultz, but not with any

²¹ Stone to Miss Virgil Payne, 30 December 1941. NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 247.

²² Stone to L. G. Flannery, State WPA Administrator, 1 August 1941, NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 247.

²³ Henrietta K. Burton, Supervisor's Report, United States Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, Division of Extension and Industry. July 6-12 1941, NARA RG 435, Entry 26, Box 9.

²⁴ Henrietta K. Burton, Supervisor's Report, United States Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, Division of Extension and Industry. July 6-12 1941, NARA RG 435, Entry 26, Box 9.

financial responsibility. . . for the present.’ In the meantime, Stone dispatched Schultz to assess ‘the market for these articles, and check on the operations in the past. . .to determine. . .whether or not any money is being made; the approximate wage that the Indian women can earn, and what the need might be for continuing such a project.’ He also asked her to assess ‘the welfare of the community and value of such articles as are being turned out.’²⁵ Schultz was optimistic, stressing ‘the procedure of the Wind River Craft Shop has been satisfactory in the standards set for the quality of beads and buckskin used, for workmanship, and for designs and colors used.’ While Sister Adams had accumulated, but had not sold, items assessed at more than \$2,000 in retail value, Schultz saw a ready market for most items. ‘Since almost all of this stock of goods consists of small articles, which can sell for about a dollar, it is expected that the whole stock will move quickly,’ generating \$500 in commissions for selling the inventory, a profit that ‘will be sufficient to pay the salary of clerks, to meet overhead expenses, and make a few additional purchases of craft work.’ Schultz recommended allocating an additional \$1,500 to increase inventory, relocating the shop to a more heavily traveled place, selling at retail rather than wholesale, and particularizing store stock. ‘No two craft articles should be exactly alike, and the display of a large number of articles nearly alike tends to cheapen them in the eyes of the tourist.’²⁶

Two arts and crafts associations resulted, one for the Shoshones at Ft. Washakie and the other an Arapaho association located at Ethete, with organizational programs that echoed New Deal associations between arts and rehabilitation. But while Wind River craft associations fused those priorities through arts and crafts, they also rationalized production and marketing. This, in turn, reflected the developing purposes of BIA’s Indian Arts and Crafts Board, and changed policy priorities, as the New Deal orientation toward self-government and cultural revival gradually subsided before a new emphasis on economic self-sufficiency and commerce.

The proposal for arts and crafts associations illustrates this point. With four basic objectives:

‘To engender in craftsmen a deeper interest in their inherent culture; to stimulate a zeal for acquiring the old craft techniques from the surviving Indians who practice them; to foster a sense of pride in their ability to compete with craftsmen elsewhere in creating beautiful craft articles; to supplement the family income by giving craftsmen the opportunity to market their produce,’²⁷

The Shultz program envisioned a bureaucratic structure, complete with Craft Clubs, each headed by officers, located in community centers and calling weekly meetings. A Craft Board composed of representation from each craft club, a tribal council person, the

²⁵ Stone to H. C. Lockett, Principal, Wind River Community School, Fort Washakie, WY 31 January 1941 NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372.

²⁶ Jessie Donaldson Schultz to H. G. Lockett, 24 May 1941, NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372.

²⁷ Jessie D. Schultz, ‘Purpose of Crafts Among the Arapahoe and Shoshone Indians,’ 24 April 1941, NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372.

superintendent and a business manager of the shop and supervisor of production (identified as an Indian Service employee). It also featured an educational program designed to train workers and maintain standards of production. This program envisioned a paid secretary-treasurer for each tribe (who ‘must have the ability to deal with people, to reject work without giving offense, to act as educational guide to craftsmen submitting work for sale’), and systematized production, linking instruction with assessment, and on to marketing and compensation. Board members were encouraged to review production, and provide women with ‘the opportunity of receiving criticism before the article is passed on’ in order to ‘be spared the embarrassment of having her product rejected by the Cooperative Purchasing Committee.’²⁸

As significantly, the proposal for craft clubs reflected a move to rationalize production. Accordingly, members should ‘be led to think in terms of a large organization of craft workers’; ‘taught the general principles of buying and selling goods and of the necessary allowance for overhead in running a business’; ‘taught the necessity of looking toward selected leaders for advice and guidance in conducting their craft affairs’; ‘generally be taught to formulate their own ideas regarding their future organization so that their Cooperative, when formed, will come from the minds and the wishes of its individual group members’; and ‘feel that they are conducting their own affairs through their selected leaders, and that whatever success may come to the Cooperative Craft Shop will mean success for its individual members.’²⁹

Finally, Schultz urged craft associations to emphasize traditional (and commercially viable) arts and crafts, from beading to doll making, from gloves, belts and jewelry to ‘coin purses, necklaces, and beaded warriors on beaded horses,’ emphasize different techniques, Shoshone and Arapaho (Eva McAdams would appreciate reference to Arapaho ‘lazy stitch’), and recover ‘old native crafts. . .lost to both Shoshone and Arapahoe Indians,’ including ‘the art of basket making which was formally done by the Shoshone.’³⁰

Schultz estimated a total investment of \$6580 to begin the projects, and in a later communication outlined compensation rates (which varied based upon the product), identified possible participants, including Mary Underwood, Lena Brown, Elizabeth Friday, Jessie Headly and Beatrice Spoonhunter at Ethete, and Katie Headley, Judith Bell, Myra Brown, Mary G. Lodge, Rose Dresser, Bridget Armajo, Margaret Spoonhunter and Viola Oldman at Arapahoe.³¹

III.

In July of 1942, the Arapaho business council approved the creation of a Cooperative Arts and Crafts Association, and authorized application for membership in the Northern Plains

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Jessie Donaldson Schultz, Eva M. Haas to Stone, Re: Educational Program in Cooperation with the Wind River Indian Craft Shop’ 25 June 1941, NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372 Folder 904.

Indian Crafts Association (NPICA). The Shoshone business council followed suit shortly. With that, arts and crafts activity on Wind River entered a new phase. An instrument of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, the NPICA functioned to market arts and crafts produced at several plains reservations, Rocky Boy's and Blackfeet along with Shoshone and Arapaho. Its Browning, Montana store displayed a wide range of products, which it purchased wholesale from crafters. Reservation crafts association received funds from NPICA and paid crafters after meeting administrative expense. Jessie Schultz oversaw activities at Wind River, communicated directly with officials in Browning, reported to the Superintendent, and coordinated the activities of the Indian-run cooperative associations.³²

The arrangement functioned adequately in some respects. By 1944 the Wind River Association had 77 members divided into two groups—St. Stephens and St. Michaels; Shoshones had 37 members. Arapahos specialized in moccasins, necklaces, blankets, medallions, cradles, turtle buttons, feathered lizards, belts, coin purses and beanies; Shoshones made gloves, moccasins, hand bags, dolls, buckskin horses with saddle and rider, beaded neckties, vests and jackets. Balance sheets from the 1940s indicate sales figures reaching \$10,000 annually for both associations, with most coming through the Browning store, with the remainder generated through retail sales in Fort Washakie and Ethete.³³ Local crafts associations fielded numerous requests, from individual consumers, retailers and collectors and Schultz reported 'fairly good' production but found it 'impossible to keep pace with the demand.' These communications reveal new articulations between production, marketing and work. Under the direction of Mabel Morrow of the BIA's educational division, the government initiated a program to place Wind River crafts in gift shops at National Parks. Instructions emphasized separating 'hand made' articles from copies and suggested marketing to 'dude ranchers.'³⁴

Beaded moccasins were among the items most in demand. In 1944, for instance, Jessie Schultz advised a Mrs. W.W. Davis of Dallas, Texas to 'make an outline of your foot and let us know the size of shoe you ordinarily wear [and] we shall be glad to have a pair of moccasins made for you by either the Shoshone or Arapaho craft workers. The Shoshones use floral pattern in their work,' she continued, 'while the Arapahoes use conventional designs and parfleche soles.' While 'both types are beautifully made,' Schultz advised Davis that since 'Arapahoes use more beads, their moccasins run about a dollar higher than the Shoshones'—\$6.50 to \$8.50 a pair depending upon size.³⁵ From Laramie, Anita

³² Forrest R. Stone to Alfreda Ward, Manager, Northern Plains Indian Arts and Craft Shop, 25 July 1942, NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372 Folder 904.

³³ Northern Plains Indian Crafts Association, Browning. Financial Statement September 1944; J.D. Schultz to J. M. Cooper, Supt., A Brief Statement of the Arapaho and Shoshone Crafts Associations, 1 October 1947; NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372 Folder 904; Excerpt from Report by Warren G. Spaulding, 10 March 1944, RG 435, Records of the IABC, Entry 26, Box 9.

³⁴ Excerpt from Report by Warren G. Spaulding, 10 March 1944, RG 435, Mabel Morrow to Stone, 14 August 1942, Rose K. Brandt, Superintendent of Indian Education to W. W. Beatty, 25 August 1942, NARA RG 435, Entry 26, Box 9;

³⁵ Jessie D. Schultz to Mrs W. W. Davis, Dallas Texas. 29 April 1944, NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372 Folder 904.

Schmidt, owner of the Connor Dress Shop, asked whether Shoshone had any crafts for sale. 'The history of the Shoshone Indians has always been of interest to me, and I would like to visit the Reservation.' Superintendent Woodrow W. Palmer welcomed the visit, any time, and forwarded a price list.³⁶ Occasionally, correspondence offered Wind River crafters an opportunity to manage production on their own. In 1947 Superintendent John C. Cooper endorsed a suggestion to initiate production of jade jewelry and identified Ben Carrier, Lloyd Dewey, Ambrose Wanstall, Buster Crispin and Bill Wheeler as 'talented persons.' On the other hand, a request from Mr. Mack Perry of Brooklyn, New York for drums, earned this polite rebuff, 'Both the Arapahoe and Shoshone Indians make drums but only for their own use in connection with their ceremonials. It may be possible for you to procure drums, however, from the Northern Plains Indian Crafts Association.' And a request from the San-Tone Moccasin Company of San Antonio for 'skilled Indians that would do beading on the leather that I would send to them' generated the terse reply: 'These people do not make a practice of doing their beadwork on materials provided by other shops.'³⁷

But tensions simmered just underneath the surface. In 1947, Ethel Tillman and Suzette Wagon, Chairman and Treasurer of the Shoshone Crafts Association complained that Mrs. Mabel Mueller, manager of the NPICA had 'advised us that we must stop production on a large number of items now being made by the Shoshone.' Writing, 'We joined the Northern Plains Association because we were told we would be able to work the year around,' not just through the summer. Reminding Cooper that 'the Shoshone women want to do craft work and will produce. . .excellent merchandise during the winter months if they are allowed to,' she requested clarification on 'our obligations. . . to the N.P. Ass'n. When we find out how we stand, we will know better whether we should consider withdrawing from the Ass'n and trying to do our own marketing.'³⁸

This was one of a series of inquiries from leadership of crafts association that basically turned on a couple issues. The first concerned production and marketing and followed Mueller's attempt to dictate which items would be marketed, in what quantities, and at which times of the year. The second involved finances. By the late 1940s, the Northern Plains Association was running an annual deficit, and had come to rely upon loans to pay its bills to the two Wind River associations. Schultz acknowledged administrative problems and traveled to Billings on several occasions to restructure the cooperative store. But she also endorsed a top down, bureaucratized system of management that reduced the autonomy of local associations, and deprived crafters of income they needed, and expected. In 1947, for instance, Shultz acknowledged that NPICA owed the two organizations nearly

³⁶ Miss Anita Schmidt, Laramie Wyoming to W. W. Palmer, 18 January 1953; Palmer to Schmidt, 23 January 1953, NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372 Folder 904.

³⁷ W. W. Palmer to Mack Perry, Peripole Products, Inc., 16 April 1951; J.M. Cooper to Willard W. Beatty, 11 December 1947; Beatty to Cooper, Mrs Dee Briggs, San-Tone Moccasin Company, San Antonio 23 September 1949; Mrs Dee Briggs to Palmer, 23 August 1949, 20 January 1947, NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372 Folder 904.

³⁸ Ethel Tillman, Chairman and Suzette Wagon, Treasurer, Shoshone Crafts Association to J.C. Cooper, 30 September 1949, NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372 Folder 904.

\$6,000, leaving the associations in debt to the tribal councils to the tune of nearly \$20,000. All the while, craft associations had ‘entered upon the production of expensive crafts such as the weaving of draperies and bed spreads and fashioning buckskin jackets, entailing the expenditure of large sums for materials and slow returns for finished products. It is this combination of factors that has made the continuation of crafts production at Wind River a serious threat.’ Regardless, Mueller argued ‘giving the central office the opportunity to slow down on certain items until the old merchandise was disposed of certainly helped in buying this past year. The curtailment was difficult for the workers, but looking at it from a long point of view, it helps keep operating capital safe.’ This remained a bone of contention. In 1965, Morrow chastised Ethel Tillman for a shortage of moccasins and forwarded ‘three dozen sheets’ listing needed articles. ‘This is of extreme importance,’ she wrote, ‘because unless this is done . . . workers continue to make the items we do not necessarily need. . . and prevents the maximum in crafts production.’³⁹

Back in 1946, W. W. Beatty, Director of the OIA’s Education Division, supported the arrangement and opposed an expansion of retail sales through reservation stores. Citing existing commitments, specifically ‘the Arapahoes have contracted to furnish fabric material for the decoration of several hotel rooms in Lander,’ and ‘special orders for moccasins, jackets, etc., from shops in Dubois and Jackson,’ Beatty proposed ‘to continue the affiliation with the Northern Plains group.’ In response, district director Paul L. Flickinger wrote, ‘We are all going to have to do considerable missionary work all over again in this connection’⁴⁰ But by the middle ‘60s, the relationship between the Northern Plains ‘middle man’ and the crafts people had soured further. ‘I am very interested in seeing these women keep up their arts and crafts and getting a market that will make it work their while,’ said an attendee to a 1964 council meeting, ‘Indian Arts and Crafts shouldn’t be let die just because it doesn’t give them enough money to make it worthwhile.’⁴¹

Epilogue

A 1970s effort to market Shoshone crafts turned attention toward artists as well as their work. Perhaps drawing upon a recent surge in the popularity of Indian cultures, this glossy brochure portrayed crafts people less as workers and more as guardians of disappearing cultures and featured brief autobiographical statements. Opposite a photograph of Millie Guina read ‘I started learning how to sew, do beadwork, embroidery, and tan hides at the age of fourteen. I am glad that I learned how to do this type of work because many of my people do not know how it is done.’ Marian Day, ‘When I was a teenager I participated in

³⁹ J. D. Schultz to Cooper, 1 January 1947, NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372 Folder 904; Mahala E. Mueller to Jessie D. Schultz, 25 February 1950, NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372 Folder 904.

⁴⁰ Paul L. Flickinger, District Director, to W. W. Beatty, 15 November 1946; Beatty to Flickinger, 25 November 1946, NARA-Rocky Mountain Branch, RG 75, Wind River Agency, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960. Box 372 Folder 904. Mabel Morrow to Ethel Tillman, 4 February 1965, NARA, RG 435, Entry 26, Box 9.

⁴¹ Joint Business Council Meeting, Ft. Washakie, 18 November 1964, RG 75, CCF, Box 37, File 3249-63-054, pt. 12.

the Lander Pioneer Days. I was chosen as the Shoshone Indian Queen for the event. It was at this time I became interested in craftwork. My mother taught me many things about traditional Shoshone craftwork.’

But one blurb stands out. ‘The price of beads and buckskin has doubled in cost over the last five years as everything else has, yet many craft workers continue to sell their finished work at the same low prices we did ten years ago. I have watched so many bead workers go and get jobs, putting their beads away, it makes me wonder if maybe this wasn’t the best thing to do.’⁴²

Eva McAdams has the last word, as the first. Her words, unromantic, practical as they are, refocuses our attention on arts as work and the work arts perform. Thinking about arts in this fashion allows us to catch a glimpse of these complex associations between arts and labor and crafts. It’s a place where non-natives saw arts and crafts as a means toward character reformation, of a sort, and then as a way to market Indianness to audiences outside the reservation. Theirs was a bureaucratic vision, reflective of type of association between art and work. Indians undoubtedly felt the same intersections of work and art, working for art, and the work that art does. But for some, at least, producing beautiful things also.

Author Bio

Brian Hosmer holds the H.G. Barnard Chair in Western American History at the University of Tulsa. His publications pivot around intersections between economic change and Indigenous nationhood in the 20th century. His books (solely authored or edited) include: *American Indians in the Marketplace: Persistence and Innovation among the Menominees and Metlakatans, 1870- 1920* (1999), *Native Pathways: Economic Development and American Indian Culture in the Twentieth Century* (2004), *Tribal Worlds: Critical Studies in American Indian Nation Building* (2013), *Native Americans and the Legacy of Harry S. Truman* (2010), and *Indians of Illinois* (forthcoming). He has published papers on reservation newsletters published during the 1930s, ‘Community-Engaged Scholarship’ in Indian country, and a study of Miami Nationhood based on papers held in the Gilcrease Museum archives (which received an award from the Oklahoma Historical Society). His next project will be a history of travel and American identity, tentatively entitled *A Trip to the States: An American Story*.

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⁴² ‘Shoshone Arts and Crafts’ n.d. (ca. 1975) NARA RG 435, Entry 26, Box 9.

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