

unity



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Cultural preservation and evolution, defined by Native artists

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Unity is published in February (Black History Month), March (Women's History Month), May (Asian Pacific American Heritage Month), June (Pride Month), September (Hispanic Heritage Month) and November (Native American Heritage Month).

Defender of the country, and her tribal heritage



Raquel Painter, a decorated Marine Corps veteran, is president of the United Way of Onslow County in North Carolina. Photo courtesy of VisitJacksonvilleNC.com

Raquel Painter's dream to join the Marine Corps started on career day in second grade, at her elementary school in Sioux City, Iowa. A classmate's father's talk about his military service deeply impacted the young Painter. "He came in with his dress blue uniform," Painter says. "From that moment on, I said, 'Wow, that's what I want.' I read books on Marines. I watched movies about Marines."

It took the recruiter three visits to Painter's home to gain her family's approval (she was only 17) to join the Marines. She left for boot camp in Parris Island, South Carolina, after high school graduation in 1989. Painter stayed for 26 years before retiring in Jacksonville, North Carolina, near Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, where she was stationed last as a sergeant major, E9, the highest rank among the enlisted. In 2021, she was awarded North Carolina's Combat Female Veteran of the Year.

Painter served at two Marine bases in Japan, Camp LeJeune and Camp Pendleton in Oceanside, California, and she had recruiting duties in Omaha, Nebraska. She also completed tours in Afghanistan and Iraq. Painter was a sergeant working at the

Military Entrance Processing Station, near the [Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building](#) in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, when it was bombed in 1995. In 2005, she assisted with rescue and cleanup efforts after the tsunami in Sri Lanka.

In Afghanistan, Painter led the Female Engagement Teams, 23 service officers tasked to engage with Afghan women, something men weren't allowed to do based on Afghan culture. FETs ask Afghan women about their everyday lives to gather information about what's going well or not so well in their compounds and villages. "That was a tremendous experience," Painter says. "That really showed the military that women really can go out there and do that."



Founded by Raquel Painter, the [Onslow Veterans Pow Wow](#) celebrates Native American culture and brings awareness to the community. Courtesy of Raquel Painter

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Pageant queen with a purpose

Since late 2022, Sistine Lewis has attended pageants, parades and other outings where her presence as the 61st [Miss Indian Arizona](#) is requested. To these events, Lewis typically wears traditional Native regalia and a beaded crown representing the state flag, feathers and the 22 Indigenous tribes in Arizona.

Lewis grew up in the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, a reservation near Scottsdale, Arizona, and home to two Native American tribes, the Pima and the Maricopa. She's a first-generation student in the honors program, attending a dual-enrollment program at nearby Scottsdale Community College, and earning a degree in nursing from Arizona State University. "I want to become a labor and delivery nurse to help welcome newborn babies," she says, "and also provide a safe environment for the moms."

As a child, Lewis saw Miss Salt River at events on the reservation. "I remember Miss Salt River in my community and she was a person I really looked up to," Lewis says. "She was somebody I really wanted to become one day."

In 2017, Lewis competed for Jr. Miss Salt River, a steppingstone to Miss Salt River, and won. Lewis decided to enter the Miss Salt River competition in 2021, during the heart of the pandemic. "I was very fortunate to have won (Miss Salt River) and be able to serve in my community," she says. "I loved every moment being able to connect with my community and being able to see them during such a hard time."

Carmen Moore, Lewis' grandmother and the 1970-1971 Miss Salt River, assisted with the traditional dress needed for the pageants. For one design, Lewis chose the fabric, an off-white muslin, and requested a river-and-basket applique sewn on the material to represent the Salt River-Pima-Maricopa Indian community.

Lewis almost retired her pageantry career after her reign as Miss Salt River, even though several community members encouraged her run for Miss Indian Arizona. While recovering from Covid-19, she reconsidered. "I didn't see myself holding that position because the women are well-spoken leaders, very powerful women holding that title," she explains. "I just never envisioned myself ever being someone like that or even placing somewhere in that category."

For the Miss Indian Arizona pageant, Lewis wrote an essay celebrating Indigenous resiliency, delivered a two-minute speech, performed a Native dance, and



Sistine Lewis, the reigning Miss Indian Arizona, wants to connect with children on and off the reservations. Photo by Michael Schaaf

modeled a two-piece traditional dress in front of an audience and a panel of judges. She also answered judges' questions about promoting Indigenous culture among young people, her platform for the pageant.

"With holding this title and representing all 22 federally recognized tribes, I really want to connect with the children, on the reservations and off the reservations," she says. "They often feel left out and don't feel connected to their culture and language. I don't want anyone to ever feel out of place from their own tribe."

Dance has been part of Lewis' life since she could walk. She performed the swing dance, a traditional O'odham (part of the Pima tribe) dance, at each pageant and demonstrated it at events around the state during her time as Miss Indian Arizona. "I really wanted to incorporate that side of me," she says. "(Dance) got me into my culture, even though at a young age I didn't know what it was or what I was doing at the time. As I've grown older, (I've realized), 'This is me. These are my people. This is how we danced back then and we're still keeping it alive today.'"

Cultural preservation and evolution, defined by Native artists

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"Sharing Honors and Burdens: Renwick Invitational 2023" reverently illuminates the practices of six Native American or Alaska Native artists.

Joe Feddersen (Arrow Lakes/Okanagan), Lily Hope (Tlingit), Ursala Hudson (Tlingit), Erica Lord (Athabaskan/Iñupiat), Geo Neptune (Passamaquoddy) and Maggie Thompson (Fond du Lac Ojibwe) adapt traditional modes of making to reflect contemporary issues faced in their individual communities. Yet, their work speaks to the world at large.

For the Renwick Invitational 2023, guest curator Lara M. Evans Ph.D (Cherokee Nation), and scholars Miranda Belarde-Lewis, Ph.D. (Zuni/Tlingit) and Anya Montiel, Ph.D. (Mexican/Tohono O'odham descent) intentionally sought out indigenous artists for the 10th installation of this invitational series, a reflection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum's renewed commitment to Indigenous/Native/Alaska Native artists and scholars.

According to Evans, the jury considered the major themes, materiality and scale of an artist's work as well as how different groupings of artists' work may interact with each other, the goal being to create a riveting narrative that highlighted the complexity of Native artists and their processes.

Juxtaposition of ancient and modern

Joe Feddersen is globally renowned for his skill in glass art, basket weaving and printmaking. The artist combines modern symbols, like QR codes, with the patterns of his maternal relatives' indigenous heritage to expose humanity's inherent connection with the environment when one chooses to see it.

Feddersen's "Charmed (Bestiary)" showcases the delicate nature of glass and creates different moments to witness how air and light transform the material. Through this phenomenon and the title referencing medieval allegories that reinforced Christian morality, Feddersen offers a reminder to avoid the human tendency to become immune to the beauty around us in nature.

Shared lineage of artistry

Lily Hope and Ursala Hudson are the daughters of celebrated weaver Clarissa Rizal (Tlingit). The elder sister of the pair, whose work is featured on the cover of *Unity*, apprenticed under their mother for over a decade in the Chilkat and Ravenstail traditions before Rizal's passing in 2016. Her creations, like the "Woven Chilkat Protector" mask series, merge the traditional facial designs of Northwestern art forms and the Chilkat method of thigh-spinning cedar fibers into yarn with the contemporary need for face masks to protect people during the pandemic.

Although Hudson grew up surrounded by their mother's work, she started weaving only after the elder weaver's untimely death. Hope stepped in to continue mentoring Hudson. However, the younger sister takes a different approach by creating innovative reinventions of traditional regalia as couture pieces that highlight feminine strength.

Adept weaver, gifted basket maker

Erica Lord is an interdisciplinary artist that grew up between Alaska and Michigan. Her installation, "The Codes We Carry," references her Alaskan heritage and their sled dogs. Decades ago, weavers made beautiful tuppies (or dog blankets) that sled dogs wore for special events. The artist recreates these but complicates the narrative by weaving the DNA structures of various diseases that disproportionately plague Native communities into the tuppies. Through this addition, Lord equally acknowledges the pride Alaska Natives share in their heritage and the inescapable nature of health disparities.

From age 4, Geo Neptune began learning basketry under the tutelage of their grandmother and master basket weaver, Molly Neptune Parker (Passamaquoddy). Neptune defines their personhood as a "two-spirit," meaning "an indigenous cultural, spiritual and gender role that holds the sacred space between masculine and feminine energies." Neptune infuses their practice with traditional forms,



"Charmed (Bestiary)" by Joe Feddersen, photographed by Albert Ting

a bright palette, and a sacred perspective, as seen in "Piluwapiyit: The Powerful One." In this self-portrait, a figure adorned with deerskin, beads and other jewels materializes from an ash tree in traditional regalia, connecting Neptune's own coming out with the creation story of their ancestral peoples.

Homage to lost loved ones

Maggie Thompson uses fiber and design to examine her Ojibwe heritage and broader themes throughout her experience as a Native American woman artist. "On Loving," references a star quilt her late father gave her mother on the eve of their wedding. In this installation of multiple star quilts, the artist carefully embellished the original design with intricate beadwork to honor all of those who passed away during the pandemic.

'Finding a way forward'

Historically, American craft world have used racist tactics to silo Native American and Alaska Native artists away from their movements. When these artists are accepted, there tends to be a specific visual expectation for "tradition." This coded signal gestures towards mainstream ideas of what Indigenous art should look like and ultimately promotes the idea that Indigenous ways of making must remain frozen in time to maintain their perceived authenticity.



"Woven Chilkat Protector Masks" by Lily Hope



"Piluwapiyit: The Powerful One" by Geo Neptune

In "Sharing Honors and Burdens: Renwick Invitational 2023," the guest curator, Lara M. Evans avoided this tendency to essentialize artists of marginalized communities by focusing on the individual stories of the artists. Near each artist's work, Evans displays documentary film shorts of each artist speaking about their processes. She went a step further by allowing the artists to review everything the audience will be exposed to about them and their work. "As a Native curator, this is a methodology I always follow," Evans elaborates. "Changing relationships between museums and artists from underrepresented communities means the artists' agency and authority must be respected in ways that can be inconvenient."

Through the intentional practices of the curator and jury, "Sharing Honors and Burdens: Renwick Invitational 2023" brilliantly disrupts mainstream ideas of indigenous traditions and highlights six Native American or Native Alaska artists working to preserve ancestral modes of making despite the grueling nature of colonization, while using their work to encourage evolution for their communities to continue growing.

The exhibition is on view through March 31, 2024 at the Smithsonian American Art Museum's Renwick Gallery in Washington, D.C. Photographs courtesy of the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

An Indigenous chef's journey from Alaska to the lower 48

When chef and author Rob Kinneen wrote "[Fresh Alaska Cookbook](#)" in 2018, he set out to celebrate ingredients available in Alaska. The recipes in the book are a mix of chef-driven dishes and meals you'd eat if you were invited to someone's home in Alaska. "I'm supposed to be an authority on (Alaskan dishes) but really there's no playbook for the work we're doing," Kinneen says. "Alaska is so unique."



Rob Kinneen's career spans roles ranging from restaurant dishwasher to outreach educator. Photo courtesy of Discover Durham

In the book, Kinneen explores the farm-to-table concept and what it means in his home state. Although people think of crab, halibut and salmon as contemporary Alaskan foods, it really depends on which part of Alaska you're in. Indigenous foods, eaten in someone's home, might look different. "Those are local foods of Alaska, but there's so much more, too," Kinneen says. "The cookbook opened up a dialogue to understand the difference of foods in Alaska."

Born in Petersburg, an island in the southeast area of Alaska, Kinneen, of Tlingit heritage, is a member of the [Sealaska Corp.](#), the Alaska Native regional corporation for Southeast Alaska. At age 14, Kinneen was a dishwasher in a Mexican restaurant near Anchorage. At 18, he started at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York, finishing two years later.

Since then, Kinneen's worked within the food industry in Louisiana, New York and North Carolina. For three years, he owned Noble's Diner, in the same building he started as a dishwasher. He's produced [video series](#) emphasizing Alaskan foods and other dishes. A highlight of his career was preparing a five-course meal for President Barack Obama in 2015 at a residence in Anchorage.

In 2016, Kinneen and his family moved to Durham, North Carolina. He'd been in contact with the nonprofit North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems, headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota, for other work he was doing with Indigenous food. "That turned into a dialogue that turned into a job," he says.

NATIFS created the [outreach director position](#) for Kinneen. "I focus on education about traditional foods and accessibility of traditional foods of the Indigenous people of the Americas," he says. "(I'm) empowering communities to look at their Indigenous food and what opportunities are there."

In his position with NATIFS, Kinneen travels, facilitating hands-on cooking classes and demonstrations at universities, festivals and other programs around the world. He teaches people how to cook healthy dishes with Indigenous foods and helps plan feasts during weeklong celebrations.

Kinneen hopes to grow NATIFS Indigenous Food Lab, a working kitchen for food relief, a quick service marketplace featuring Indigenous foods and an incubator for entrepreneurs. Right now, additional extensions of the flagship IFL in Minnesota are being planned. Each extension will represent the region where it's located. "The eventual thought is that there should be one in every state," he says.

Collard-Sorghum Salad

Servings: 2

Ingredients

Jam jar dressing

- 3 tablespoons salad oil
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon sorghum

Add to a jar, secure tightly and shake.

Vegan cornbread

- 2 teaspoon apple cider vinegar
- 2 cups coconut milk
- 1/4 cup sunflower oil
- 1 cup gluten-free baking flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 1/2 cups cornmeal
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons sugar

Salad and toppings

- 6-8 leaves, (about 2 cups) collards, cut into thin ribbons, 1/4-inch wide, 2 inches long
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons pecans, crushed and toasted
- 8 muscadine grapes, cut into quarters, seed removed (optional)

Directions

Preheat the oven to 400 F. Mix the wet ingredients with the dry ingredients. Once incorporated, stop stirring; do not overmix. Put into a pie tin or 8-inch-by-8-inch ovenproof dish. Cook for 35 minutes, or until a toothpick is removed clean.

For the croutons, cube the cornbread into 1/4-inch pieces; cook in the oven 8-10 minutes at 350 F until toasty and firm.

To plate, add the collards and 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt, massage, let rest for a minute. Add 2 tablespoons of the dressing, and then mix. Divide into 2 salads, or into a big bowl. Top with the pecans and grapes, and then add the cornbread croutons.

Educator's message, cuisine steeped in tradition

Earlier in 2023, David Smoke McCluskey helped open Park Avenue Oyster Bar & Grill in Aiken, South Carolina. As executive chef and a member of the Mohawk Nation, McCluskey rotates Native foods and Native inspired dishes through the specials, but the menu mostly features oysters, seafood and Southern classics.



David Smoke McCluskey has always been interested in "keeping old traditions alive." Photo courtesy of David Smoke McCluskey

McCluskey grew up in Yarmouth, Massachusetts, on Cape Cod. He always worked in restaurants, he says, mostly in the Northeast until he moved to North Augusta in 2000. He's spent 35 years in hospitality promoting Indigenous, organic, sustainable, locally and regionally grown ingredients, as well as foraged foods and medicines. As an Indigenous foods educator, he gives lectures across the country. He's a member of the [North American Indigenous Center of New York](#) and the [Slow Food USA Southeast Ark of Taste Board](#). McCluskey is a consultant for the Catawba Nation in South Carolina.

The three sisters diet - consisting of eating corn, beans and squash - has been part of McCluskey's message to other Indigenous people. "All three provide more energy per acre than any other poly- or monoculture of plants," McCluskey explains. "It's my belief that a return to plant-based or semiplant-based eating in the form of the three-sisters diet is more nutritional for not only Natives but everyone. It improves our diets."

In 2021, McCluskey opened [Corn Mafia](#). He grows Iroquois White, Mohawk Red and Six Nations Blue on less than 5 acres in South Carolina and prepares the Natives corns through nixtamalization, a process of cooking, steeping, washing, grinding and drying.

McCluskey cofounded the [Augusta Boucherie](#) at [White Hills Farms](#) in Dearing, Georgia, where participants butcher hogs and other animals such as chickens, ducks, goats and turkeys, and work together to break down the animals. Local chefs cook on-site at the same time.

"In most areas with small farms, families weren't big enough to butcher the hog, and needed more hands," he says. "(Now) we do all these things in an educational fashion. This is a revisiting of that whole cultural event, kind of to keep things alive. It's something I've always been interested in - keeping old traditions alive."

Lyeing Mohawk Johnny Cakes

"These are kind of like corn-powered pancakes - a favorite of both Rhode Island and Appalachia. Add some quality rendered bacon lardons (strips of salt pork) to the cakes, and maybe some whipped Kentucky beer cheese on top or even some Florida-style smoked fish dip if you like." - David Smoke McCluskey To plate, add the collards and 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt, massage, let rest for a minute. Add 2 tablespoons of the dressing, and then mix. Divide into 2 salads, or into a big bowl. Top with the pecans and grapes, and then add the cornbread croutons.

Serving: 3-4

Ingredients

- 2 1/2 cups of Corn Mafia Cornmeal or Lyeing Mohawk Masa
- 1/2 cup unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 tablespoons bacon drippings or duck fat
- 3 tablespoons quality butter
- 2 1/2 cups buttermilk
- 1 egg
- Corn oil

Directions

Mix the dry ingredients in a bowl. Warm the butter and bacon drippings and combine with the wet ingredients in a large bowl. Slowly mix the dry into the wet ingredients, whisking so there are no lumps. The batter should be on the light side, so don't overmix.

In a warm cast-iron pan, add a bit of the corn oil, and test a tablespoon of the batter to check the heat of the pan. Medium usually does it - the edges should lightly bubble and brown when it's time to flip them. Once the heat is adjusted, you can fry off the remaining batter by the tablespoon or larger if you like.



Defender of the country, and her tribal heritage

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Since retiring in 2015, Painter's has focused on giving back to Jacksonville and Onslow County communities, including military veterans and Native Americans. She's a member of the [Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska](#), her mother's tribe. And she acknowledges her heritage as a [Santee Sioux](#) through her father, but she can only be enrolled in one tribe.

In 2018, Painter became [president](#) of the United Way of Onslow County. Her priority has been the Children Healthy Eating on Weekends (CHEW!), a program feeding 900 children on the weekends to sustain them until they return to school on Mondays, when they can get free breakfast and lunch if their family qualifies. "A hungry child is at a disadvantage," Painter explains. "It puts the child behind. And the chances of them graduating are slim to none."

In 2021, Painter founded the [Onslow Veterans Powwow](#) to celebrate Native American culture and bring awareness to the community. All tribes, branches of the military and the public are invited to attend the Nov. 4-5 free event at the American Legion. Last year, almost 6,000 spectators including many from military bases across the Carolinas, came to see Native Americans in full regalia for dances and to listen to Native songs played on drums and flutes. "We honor all veterans, not just Native veterans," she says. "Before each dance, we call up all the veterans and we play the veterans' song. It's a sight to see. We've had veterans come up afterward and say they've never felt truly home until they came to a powwow. One said to me, 'This is the recognition I've been waiting for.'"

On the cover: Lily Hope, "Memorial Beats, 2021," thigh-spun merino and cedar bark with copper, headphones and audio files, 16 by 4 by 10 inches, The Hope Family Trust. Photo by Sydney Akagi. Articles on pages 2, 3, 6 and 7 by Vanessa Infanzon. Article on pages 4-5 by Jade Flint. Published six times per year, *Unity* is exclusively distributed to clients of Thompson Hospitality and Compass Group, both world leaders in foodservice. To contact us, send an email to marketing@thompsonhospitalityjv.com. ©2023 Thompson Hospitality and Compass Group. Produced by [Content Spectrum](#).