unity

Celebrating Food, Art & Culture

Storytelling through comics

New ways to make an old bread

Glenda McKay's dolls
are more than playthings

Native stars shine in the NHL

Hotshot can take the heat

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Hotshots often respond to large high-priority fires and are trained and equipped to work in remote areas for extended periods with little logistical support. Seven Hotshot crews are based on Indian reservations.

Hotshots can take the heat

Historically, the time for fighting California wildfires runs from August through December, but recent years make it clear that fire season in the most populous state is year round. And California isn't the only state facing escalating fire threats: during the first six months of 2009, there were more than 45,000 fires reported in the United States with almost 2 million acres affected.

Containing and extinguishing the most dangerous wildfires, those that can rage out of control and pose serious risks to life and property, fall into the hands of elite, 20-member Hotshot crews. There are 90 Hotshot crews nationwide, seven of which are employed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and are made up of a diverse group of American Indians from many nations and many walks of life. In California, where wildfires seem to create a daily drama, the Golden Eagle Hotshots from the Sycuan Indian Reservation are often called to action.

Hotshots often respond to large high-priority fires and are trained and equipped to work in remote areas for extended periods with little logistical support. Sleep deprivation is a serious challenge for crew members. Hotshots must undergo rigorous training and fitness exercises in full gear while standing ever ready to go wherever needed, often placing themselves in mortal danger. For starters, Hotshots must pass the Work Capacity Test at the arduous level, meaning they must complete a three-mile, rigorous hike wearing a 45-pound pack in 45 minutes or less. But the training is often far more intense.

Members of the Golden Eagles endure a military-style boot camp that pushes recruits to the limit. The fitness requirements aren't about looking good in a fire suit — one out-of-shape fire fighter can endanger the lives of hundreds of people.

Reagan Armstrong Jr., an Apache Indian of the White Mountain Indian Reservation, is a recent graduate of the Sycuan fire fighting program. "The first day was the hardest," he says. "I see these guys doing pushups and GIs yelling at the recruits. They don't mess around here, that's for sure."

Hotshot crews travel by truck, van or plane, and to get to more remote fires, crews hike or are flown in by helicopter. Crew members pack all the water and supplies needed for work shifts that frequently exceed 12 hours or longer. Crews sleep on the ground and are lucky to get a shower every couple of days.

As a rule Hotshots are among the nation's leading wildfire professionals and the work they perform is often the turning point on a fire. Their specialty is wildfire suppression, but they are sometimes assigned other jobs, including search and rescue and disaster response assistance. Hotshots not busy fighting fire will also work to meet resource goals on their home units through thinning, prescribed fire implementation, habitat improvement or trail construction projects.

The Golden Eagles maintain a comprehensive Web site complete with videos, photos and testimonials. For more information, visit www.goldeneagles.org.

American Indian Hotshot Crews

Fort Apache Hotshots
Apache Indian Nation
Fort Apache Indian Reservation, White River, Ariz.

Warm Springs Hotshots
Wasco and Paiute Indian Nations
Warm Springs Indian Reservation, Warm Springs, Ore.

Chief Mountain Hotshots
Blackfeet Indian Nation
Blackfeet Indian Reservation, Browning, Mont.

Geronimo Hotshots
Apache Indian Nation
San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation, San Carlos, Ariz.

Zuni Hotshots
Zuni Indian Nation
Zuni Indian Reservation, Zuni, N.M.

Golden Eagles Hotshots
Kumeyaay-Diegueño Indian Nation
Sycuan Indian Reservation, El Cajon, Calif.

Navajo Hotshots
Navajo Indian Nation
Navajo Indian Reservation, Gallup, N.M.

"Faces of the Past," by Glenda McKay, photo courtesy of homeandaway.biz

Stan Lee's work at Marvel Comics is venerated in Jason Garcia's graphics.

More than playthings

One of Glenda McKay's miniature-doll artworks is listed for $75,000, another (pictured above) for $25,000. Obviously, these aren't dolls given nonchalantly to children. Just one of McKay's works reflects hundreds of hours of planning, gathering, cutting, chiseling, stitching and glueing. Completed, the dolls stand less than 6-inches tall, and they embody the fine details of McKay's Athabascan heritage in aesthetics and construction.

Those fine details are crafted from carefully selected materials such as seal hide, walrus ivory, beaver fur and baleen, a substance harvested from whales that is similar to the hooves and fingernails found in mammals. Fossilized mammoth bones are used to create masks and other accessories. These materials are stigmatized in the mass markets, but they have been and still are essential to the Native American way of life. The dolls celebrate a spiritual connection to Earth and accentuate the fact that nothing goes to waste when aboriginal people harvest animals from the land. The fossilized bone, which is quite rare and might be 12,000 to 25,000 years old, represents the connection of contemporary generations to generations past.

McKay began her crafting skills at age 7 and was soon beading and making mukluks (Arctic boots). Her early teens were spent in the Arctic wilderness where she was taught to survive off the land without using so much as a pocketknife. She comes from a long line of tenacious women — her grandmother raced in the original Iditarod. Currently, she travels and exhibits at venues across the country. Her work is available through Home and Away Galleries in Maine. Visit www.homeandaway.biz for more information.

Pueblo superheroes

A recent exhibition at the National Museum of the American Indian explored the proliferation of Native American comic book authors. As the first widely accessible mass media, comics were consumed by Indians because their format is an ancient form of storytelling, similar to the use of cave drawings dating back thousands of years. Jason Garcia, a member of the Santa Clara Pueblo Indians in New Mexico, was included in the exhibition and in a recent interview, he remembered his days as a youth lost in the pages of Marvel Comics.

"When I was growing up, I was like any other American kid who loved to read 'Spiderman,' 'Sgt. Rock' and 'X-Men,'" Garcia explained. Remembering those epic battles of good and evil, with nothing less than the fate of humanity at stake, Garcia launched into his own exploration of Pueblo history using the Marvel classics as an artistic medium.

In August 1680, such an epic battle was fought by the Pueblos. The Spanish had enslaved portions of the tribe, aggressively moved to destroy the natives' religion and enforced a heavy tax on the Indians that had to be paid in food. Tired of the oppression, a warrior named Po'Pay orchestrated a successful revolt that forced the Spanish to leave the pueblos and take refuge in El Paso del Norte. More than a decade later, the Spanish would return, but treatment of the Pueblo Indians would be improved.

Garcia is also a master potter and is noted for his painted clay tiles on which he paints representations of Pueblo life in a traditional two-dimensional style. The paintings are highly accurate in terms of costume and colors, and they often comment on local events and problems.

"Release" and "The Gathering" by Carmen Hathaway

Forging the future

A collection from contemporary Native American masters

American Indian and Native Alaskan art is known to have a strong connotation with spiritual and symbolic concepts found in nature. Our featured artists have a unique way of discovering and reconnecting with this aspect of Native culture. The underlying bond between these artists is an initial unfamiliarity with their own Native American art and traditions. As they explored their heritage, they realized that their culture could be preserved though art, making it possible for others to learn.

Carmen Hathaway

Carmen Hathaway, an Abenaki band member of the Odanak Reserve in Quebec, Canada, experienced an upbringing in a European household where she was forced to conceal her native ancestry.

Even though she was deprived of her aboriginal culture, curiosity and pride allowed her to rediscover her heritage. She believes that it has been a "subconscious undercurrent in her life."

Raw emotion manifests with powerful intensity in Hathaway's art as she uses diverse media to achieve focused thematic structure and content. Her analytical, sequential thinking is evident in her featured piece, "Empathy," on the cover of this issue of *Unity*. This piece bears witness to difficulties encountered in the journey of self-discovery, as she explains, "Regardless of how it presents itself — the pathos of struggle engenders empathy."

Other digital works pictured above include "The Gathering," which she created as a reflection on her first chance to socialize with Canadian aboriginal people, and "Release," a work depicting an opportunity in resolving the dilemma of identity.

Hathaway's past works include pencil, pen and ink, oil and acrylic paint, glass beads, leather, clay and stained glass. She is developing interactive digital projects where she explores the inheritance of tarot cards painted by her grandmother, and her experience reconnecting with her heritage.

Hathaway recently accepted the invitation of the chairperson of Tougaloo College's art department, professor Johnnie Mae Mayberry-Gilbert, to return to Mississippi as a guest artist/instructor for the 2010 Art Colony.

Her digital prints, "Resurrection" (2009) and "Deliverance" (2009), have been purchased for exhibition in Vancouver for a celebration honoring the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

David Martine

David Bunn Martine began studying and depicting his own heritage during his college days through training and art studies. David graduated from the University of Oklahoma, Norman, Okla., with a BFA and honors, then attended the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, N.M., receiving a certificate focused on museum studies. He also attended Central State University, Edmond, Okla. and obtained a master's in art education. Since then, he has been influenced by his interest in Native American historical scenes.

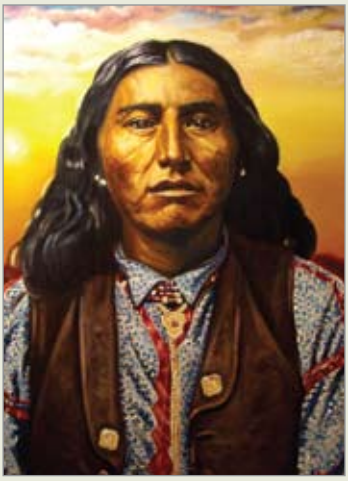
Martine is a member of the Shinnecock and Montauk Nations, as well as the Fort Sill-Chiricahua Apache tribe. Chiricahua Apache homelands are in the southeastern part

of Arizona, southwestern New Mexico and Northern Mexico.

Martine believes his family members and their strong art background have made it possible to pursue his career as an artist. Martine's father is a Hungarian music director, choir director and organist, while his mother studied fine arts in college and was a professional singer. Martine's great-grandfather was a wood carver and his father carved ivory whale teeth on shipboard using a craft called *scrimshaw*.

Martine absorbed the history of his heritage and began drawing and selling portraits of Indian chiefs, sailing ships and animals at a young age. His featured work, "Taza," shows the older son of Chiricahua Apache Chief Cochise. Taza was trained to replace his father but died before he could fulfill his destiny. His other painting, "Mocomanto," is a portrayal of the Shinnecock Algonquian chief who signed a deed with English settlers during the 17th century.

As an artist, Martine hopes to educate the general public about Native American culture "to the extent that (the public) would not believe the stereotypes promulgated by the mass media, which tends to overgeneralize about the American Indian culture or engages in outright distortions."



"Mocomanto" and "Taza" by David Martine

Phillip Charette

Phillip "Aarnaquq" Charette is a mixed-media artist, multidimensional storyteller and member of the Alaskan Yup'ik people. The foundation of his work comes mostly from Yup'ik heritage, however, the diversity of his pieces reflects and resonates with the customs and traditions of others who share the Native American experience.

Charette is one of the leading creators of traditional Yup'ik masks that consist of wood, clay (raku and horsehair fired), porcelain, glass, bronze, copper and other materials. The artwork "Amikuk" represents a powerful spirit — in Yup'ik cosmology — that lives like an otter under the floating ground of the tundra. It is believed that if Amikuk were to discover the presence of others, the spirit would possess them and cause them to do crazy and unimaginable things.

Charette's other featured work, "Poisoned," represents spiritual artifacts defaced with writing, soaked in arsenic, and badly repaired or reassembled without knowledge of ceremonial meanings. The work challenges museums to take responsibility in the return and repair of traditional artifacts to their natural state.

In 2006, Charette was honored with the Artists Choice award for his Qucillgaq ("The Crane") sculpture at the Santa Fe Indian Art Market, and in 2008 he received the Best of Division and First Place awards for one of his Medicine series monotype prints. He is a Southwestern Association of Indian Arts Fellowship recipient. He also designs and sells Native flutes and drums and has been featured on Oregon Public Broadcasting's "Oregon Art Beat."

"Amikuk" and "Poisoned" by Phillip Charette

Indian Tacos

Recipe by Roberta Kesselring
www.foodnetwork.com, serves 6

1 pound ground chuck or sirloin
Taco seasoning
1 cup refried beans
3 cups flour
1 tablespoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon sugar
1 tablespoon powdered milk
1 tablespoon lard or margarine
1 1/2 cups warm water
Vegetable oil

Topping suggestions:
Grated cheese
Chopped tomatoes
Chopped onions
Chopped green chiles
Chopped olives
Salsa
Sour cream

Brown the beef in saute pan over medium-high heat. Add taco seasoning, to taste. Add refried beans. Mix well and set aside.

For the fry bread: Mix flour, baking powder, salt, sugar and powdered milk. Add lard or margarine and mix. Add water to make dough soft. Refrigerate until use. Dough will keep several days.

In a heavy skillet, heat 3/4-inch of oil to 375 degrees.

Pat or roll out dough into about 6 (1/4- to 3/8-inch thick) rounds. Slide into hot oil. Puncture once or twice. Fry until golden brown. Flip the dough over and fry other side to golden brown. Take out and drain on paper towels.

Spoon some of the meat onto hot bread and top with your choice of cheese, tomatoes, onions, green chiles, olives, salsa and sour cream.

Raccoons and beavers and squirrels, oh my!

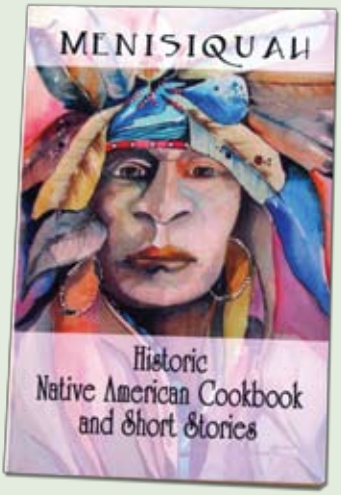
As far as authenticity goes, one might not find a cookbook more authentic than "Historic Native American Cookbook and Short Stories" by Rhonda Carlson, aka Menisiquah. Carlson brings to print the recipes and stories she has discovered working on the Menominee Indian Reservation in Wisconsin.

Void of the glitz and glamour that accompany most contemporary cookbooks, Carlson's entry consists of 216 unglossy, nearly photoless pages of recipes that often skip the preparation details and assume readers know their way around the kitchen. It is the stark, frank originality that lends this cookbook the charm needed to become a collector's item.

Among the recipes for wild rice casserole, roasted pheasant and rhubarb bread — dishes one can instantly imagine on a hot plate for tonight's dinner — are others that require more concentrated imagination to appreciate. Grey squirrel stew, baked beaver and roasted raccoon are eye-catchers, along with the recipe simply titled "Porcupine." Turtle soup and cactus salad are the perfect warm ups, and meals can be finished with Indian pudding or venison mince meat. Not exactly recipes featured on the Food Network, but that's the point.

Why wouldn't a Native American cookbook include these dishes and others that explain how to cook just about anything that moves? The resistance to Americanizing or glamorizing aboriginal foods — a standard practice with nearly all ethnic cuisines — is part of this cookbook's allure. The only dilemma is where to find the ingredients.

Included as lagniappe are stories handed down from one generation to the next that explain how humans became hostile with animals and friendly with plants, the origins of game hunting and the proper use of herbal medicine.



The resistance to Americanizing or glamorizing aboriginal foods — a standard practice with nearly all ethnic cuisines — is part of this cookbook's allure.

Baked Pumpkin

Serves 6-8

1 small pumpkin
2 tablespoons apple cider
2 tablespoons honey
2 tablespoons melted butter

Wash the pumpkin well. Place on a pie pan and bake at 350 degrees for 1 1/2 hours. Remove from the oven and cut a hole in the top of the pumpkin about 3 to 4 inches in diameter. Scoop out the pulp and seeds.

Mix together the honey, cider and melted butter or margarine. Baste the flesh of the pumpkin with the mixture. Replace the top and place in the oven for another 35 to 40 minutes, basting occasionally.

Serve whole, scooping out the individual portions at the table, or cut into wedges as you would a melon. Ladle a little of the cider mixture over each serving.

Native hockey stars shine in NHL

By David Wiwchar, Indian Country Today correspondent

It's game night at a sold-out Rexall Place. The rafters shake as 17,000 hockey fans cheer wildly every time Edmonton Oiler Sheldon Souray touches the puck in the opponent's zone. Known for his blistering shot from the point, and his punishing checks into the boards, the 6-foot-4, 235-pound defenseman is arguably the most known and feared aboriginal player in the National Hockey League. With 23 goals this season, Souray is the second-highest-scoring defenseman in the league.

Although aboriginal players are a rarity in the NHL, there are nine Native players currently spread amongst the 32 teams, and on that night Souray faced one of his peers.

Cody McCormick has spent the past five seasons with the Colorado Avalanche. A member of the Chippewa Mohawk Nation near London, Ontario, McCormick said he looks forward to facing other Native players, and hopes more will soon graduate to the big league.

"You know when you're going to be facing other (aboriginal players) just because there's not that many of us," McCormick said. "I look forward to nights like tonight, going up against another Native player. It makes me work that much harder out there."

The road to hockey's top league is long and hard, and according to Souray, that road is even longer for players from remote aboriginal communities.

"I moved from Fishing Lake to Edmonton when I was 13 so I could play in the city league," said the 11-season NHL veteran. "It was really hard to do. As close knit as Native people and communities are, a lot of kids get really homesick and call it quits. I guess I was lucky because my parents made me endure the separation so I could get to where I am today."

Sheldon Souray, the second-highest-scoring defenseman in the National Hockey League, skates for the Edmonton Oilers.

Souray said there is a huge amount of hockey talent waiting to be discovered on the frozen ponds and outdoor rinks of Native communities across Canada. Limited numbers of junior hockey scouts means the smaller leagues and rinks are ignored, and aboriginal players have to relocate to join large city league teams to be noticed by the right people.

Cody McCormick of the Colorado Avalanche

The path was similar for the Philadelphia Flyers' small but feisty Metis center, Arron Asham, who left his home in Portage La Prairie, Manitoba for teams in Red Deer, Alberta and Fredericton, New Brunswick before being drafted by the Montreal Canadiens in 1996.

"You see a lot of good aboriginal players playing in small communities or in their own leagues on the reservations," Asham said. "But you don't get any exposure there, so you have to play in the highly competitive city leagues."

Between games and during the off-season, most aboriginal NHL players can be found working in remote communities, encouraging aspiring hockey players to pursue their dreams.

"I try to do whatever I can to help the next generation," McCormick said. "Jonathan Cheechoo was a big influence for me, so I hope I can pass that on to other kids."

"What it comes down to is the fact that there are a number of aboriginal players in the NHL proving to our kids that they can be here living their dream if it's what they want," said former NHL tough guy Gino Odjick, Mohawk. "With the number of our people who play hockey, there should be even more of us in the NHL; that's why every one of us who has played at that level continue to work to make the road easier for the next generation to get there."

Cover photos: Top, fighting California's wildfires; center, fry bread is a Native staple; bottom right, "Empathy" by Carmen Hathaway; bottom left, "Qaviq" by Glenda McKay. ***Unity*** is a celebration of food, art and culture. 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 e-mail to unity@thompsonhospitalityjv.com.