

Needle, Bead, and Voice: Learning about Yukon First Nations Traditional Sewing from Mrs. Annie Smith and Ms. Dianne Smith

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Introduction

A pair of moccasins lies on its foam and tissue paper in a government art collection, or gets worn around the house. Sometimes the name of the artist who made them is known, but too seldom. What are the stories in those slippers? There is room for our collective understanding of traditional sewing as an art form to grow.

Traditional sewing is a phrase that finds its definition in its context rather than its component words. In the Yukon and many other places, traditional sewing is generally understood to refer to Indigenous sewing traditions, and usually takes the form of vests, moccasins, mukluks, gauntlet mitts, and so on. It includes an active art community in our contemporary world.

This article comes out of a research project undertaken in 2014-15 to learn about traditional sewing from Kwanlin Dun First Nation Elders Mrs. Annie Smith and her daughter Ms. Dianne Smith who are both respected sewing teachers in their community. I believe that there is much to learn from these women, and from the artists who practice traditional sewing. Bringing their voices into company with their artworks will enrich all of us, in the Yukon and beyond, First Nations and non-First Nations alike.

After the research process, I came across constructivist educational theory. It seems to define knowledge as that which “we construct for ourselves as we learn” (Dewey, 1938, qtd in Hein, 2011, p. 44). This definition helped me realize that I wanted to learn about how Mrs. Smith and Dianne construct meanings from traditional sewing

I will write in the first person for a number of reasons. I speak from personal experience, of what I managed to put together within the research relationship I have been privileged to have with Mrs. Smith and Dianne. Shawn Wilson wrote in the first person in *Research is Ceremony* (2008), and I follow him in this choice.

I must introduce myself so you know something about this “I” who is speaking. My name is Nicole Bauberger. I am a non-Indigenous person. I lived in Peterborough, Ontario before I moved to Whitehorse in 2003. When I can, I look at art in galleries a great deal, wherever I am. I am fairly well-known in the Yukon as a painter and arts writer, though I sometimes do other projects in other media. This is one of them.

How *Needle, Bead and Voice* Came to Be

I recently completed a diploma in Northern Studies at Yukon College, in order to learn more about the context and challenges of the art world I’m part of, and to build learning relationships in my own community. Books on traditional sewing often call it “art” in their titles (Duncan, 1989; Riewe, 1995; Thompson, 2013). However, I see room for improvement in the way we understand these works as art and the makers of these works as artists, especially in public presentation.

*How *Needle, Bead and Voice* came out of looking at exhibitions*

Too often, when I see works by Indigenous artists in galleries, it seems to me that their voices are obscured by that of the institution, much more so than with other artists. For example, a viewer visiting the Art Gallery of Ontario in 2014 would find quotations from Alex Colville and Michelangelo prominently displayed on tall, brightly coloured banners. Their voices were celebrated, amplified by their exhibitions. For Manasie Akpaliapik’s show of whalebone carvings, on display upstairs at the same time, not a word of his own appeared in the installation design.

There are exhibitions that celebrate Indigenous artists’ voices. For example, at the Museum of Contemporary Native Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico, curators included a video interview with their exhibit of paintings by Ric Gendron that brought a clear sense of his voice to his already eloquent expressionist works. They also included the moccasins made for him by a relative, which appear in one of the paintings, with his own words beside them, talking about inhabiting different worlds as a Native person (Gendron, 2014). In *Sewing Our Traditions: Dolls of Canada’s North*, an exhibit created by the Yukon Arts Centre for the Cultural Olympiad

in Vancouver in 2010, curator Jennifer Bowen included bios and, in the case of artists from the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, often included actual words spoken or written by the artists who made the dolls in the travelling exhibit (Yukon Arts Centre, 2010).

Those voices added to that show exactly what was missing from *Nunavut's Culture on Cloth*, a show of wall hangings by women from Baker Lake, Nunavut, curated by Judith Varney-Burch, that appeared at the Yukon Arts Centre Public Gallery in June of 2012. These textile works themselves fascinated me, evoking a physical and imaginative world with craft and innovation. But they clearly had stories behind them that a Yukon audience could not have known. Sadly, the curator provided neither biographies nor statements from the artists whose work was on display (Bauberger, 2012). The “present absence” of these voices and their stories helped me see what good curatorial practice might look like.

How Needle, Bead and Voice came out of my studies at Yukon College

In 2014, I took the Yukon College Preservation of Traditional Knowledge course with Mark Nelson. Nelson assigned us to invent a traditional knowledge research project, and to answer ethics review questions about it. I tied myself into knots trying to figure out how to do this. In class up to that point we had learned that research projects should come from the community, not from outside. And I am a non-Indigenous person.

At that time, I sat on the board for the Friends of Yukon Permanent Art Collection (FOYPAC), which selects what work to buy for the Yukon Permanent Art Collection (YPAC). They—at that time, we—occupy a group position of power, selecting what installations, paintings, and sculptures, as well as carving and traditional sewing, will be collected, celebrated, and preserved for the future. We construct what meanings we see in the artworks in order to make these decisions. It seemed to me that if we learned more about traditional sewing, that knowledge could be useful to the board and curator. In the context of that collection, we belong to the same community.

For a previous Yukon College course I had interviewed Mrs. Annie Smith about traditional sewing, through contact with Lena White, her daughter-in-law and one of Mrs. Smith's accomplished students. I wanted to undertake a better interview process. An important part of the project design included paying Elders honoraria for their time, which Nelson called standard practice. Then my Social History of the North teacher Amanda Graham pointed out the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies (ACUNS) Northern Resident Award. Projects for

this award require undertaking a research project that will benefit a not-for-profit society in the applicant's community. FOYPAC seemed to fit the bill. The year 2015 had been designated the Year of Fine Craft, and Garnet Meuthing, YPAC curator, had planned a special call for submissions focused on craft, as well as a summer exhibition at the Yukon Arts Centre with this focus. She felt that what would be learned through this project would benefit the jury in making decisions as well as her own curatorial work. Our application was successful, and Amanda Graham and I designed a Special Topics in Northern Studies course to support the project.

Preparing for Needle, Bead, and Voice

In addition to more traditionally academic activities like compiling an annotated bibliography and reviewing a book on traditional sewing, the NOST 229 course Amanda Graham and I designed together included ways to access both practical, hands-on knowledge and an oral kind of social knowledge.

For the latter, I kept a "log of ten advisors" in order to access the knowledge in my community. I described my research project to ten people with experience in this area, asking their advice. Their reactions to my project as well as their advice to change it were important on many levels. What they had to say improved the project design and helped me make fewer errors. But their support as well as their critique was very important to me. I was not undertaking a research project as part of a faculty or cohort of master's degree students. I did not have that kind of community around me to normalize my behaviour. These advisors acted as a kind of ethics review board for me, with a practical, on the ground, local understanding supporting those ethical choices. It also helped inform my community about what I was doing and helped me find the support I needed to plan the events of the research. In particular, meeting up with Krista Reid, Cultural Programs Coordinator at the Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre (KDCC), was essential in planning the public presentation of our research.¹

The "log of ten advisors" was particularly important to the ethical structure of my research project because there was no one at Kwanlin Dun First Nation (KDFN) at that time who was working specifically in Heritage, who could ask me for specific forms to be filled out for permissions. John Meikle at the Lands and Resources Department of KDFN did his best to work with me. I sent him my ethics review documents, and he receives that

materials that come out of the project on behalf of KDFN. He suggested I offer to make a presentation about my research project to the Elders' Council, but they were satisfied with the summary I sent.²

To add practical knowledge to my listening, I sewed a pair of gauntlet mitts with Shelby Blackjack's guidance in the fall of 2014. Blackjack is a member of the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, and in 2014 she began a doctoral program in Indigenous Governance at the University of Victoria. Blackjack has been offering traditional sewing workshops through the Yukon Arts Centre and other organizations. I sewed a pair of moccasins with her in one of these workshops (Bauberger, 2008). I thought if I could sew mitts with her, I would have someone closer to my own age who might field my questions as they arose. Because Blackjack's planned research investigated traditional sewing and traditional law, we had common interests. I left our visits with titles to read as well as seams to sew.

I kept a journal of this mitten-making process, which turned into a research journal. This was an indispensable part of navigating the first half of my research. I was able to get excited and construct meanings from my experiences or from things I had seen, then, later, realize the flaws in my constructions. It made the process of constructing meaning visible to myself.

Finally, it felt right and respectful to also bring something to each meeting that was from me, that was not funded by anyone. I brought biscuits I baked, or just blueberries. While this seemed crucial to bring to the first, unpaid, exploratory meeting, it felt right to keep it up. If research is a ceremony, it is important to give it something from yourself as well.

Design of Needle, Bead and Voice

In addition to principles I learned in the "Preservation of Traditional Knowledge" course, Jennifer Bowen,³ one of my ten advisors, helped me a great deal with this design. She also made an initial call to Dianne Smith to arrange our first meeting.

At our initial meeting at Mrs. Annie Smith's house, I described the project and its intentions, making sure Mrs. Smith and Dianne knew I was open to their input and changes. We agreed on terms and signed consent forms. I also dropped off images of the works in the collection I thought they could talk to me about, so they had time to think about what they might want to say.

I felt nervous going to this first meeting, still haunted by the principle that research projects need to emerge from the community itself. I was tremendously relieved when Dianne said she too thought that traditional sewing is not well enough understood, that there are stories behind it that need to be heard. A weight lifted off my shoulders. After that, we had four main paid sessions (with two extras added later).

One: Looking at Pictures, Time to Think

At our first meeting, we looked at images of sewing I had previously photographed in the permanent collection so that Mrs. Smith and Dianne could think about which they wanted to speak about and what they wanted to say. I took notes. This helped prepare Mrs. Smith and Dianne Smith for the next stage, the video interview; it also helped me to know what stories they might be interested in telling, and helped me to ask better questions. They also gave me Mrs. Smith's photo album so I could scan the pictures and add them to the files at the permanent collection.

Two: Video Interview

On January 8, 2015, we shot a video interview at the Yukon Arts Centre with Mrs. Annie Smith and Dianne handling the actual pieces from the collection so they could show us stitches and other details. Garnet Meuthing brought out the works from the collection, and the Yukon College Research Fund enabled me to hire a student, who was also a Champagne-Aisihik First Nation citizen, to help with the videography and editing. We looked closely at Mrs. Smith's two dolls in the collection, as well as at a doll by Mrs. Smith's mother-in-law and Dianne Smith's grandma Kitty Smith. We also looked at Mrs. Kitty Smith's wooden carvings in the collection and at Mrs. Marge Jackson's gopher skin cape.⁴ Mrs. Smith sewed while we talked. Dianne Smith is a gifted storyteller, and the resulting video weaves together family stories, reflections on traditional sewing, and practical techniques for how to do it, with a lot of laughter.

I spent many hours editing this research video. I added still images and video footage shot from other angles, with the aim of supporting what Mrs. Smith and Dianne were telling us. This was a new medium for me. In cutting and joining, picking and unpicking, I was reminded of sewing. I kept hearing Dianne's voice saying, "You've got to slow down, respect what you're doing." I remembered Mrs. Smith saying, "There's no such thing as can't do!" Editing allowed me to spend a lot of time with their voices and the stories they shared. This process added to what I learned from their words.

Three: Vetting

On February 11, we had a vetting session where I showed Mrs. Smith and Dianne the draft video, and reviewed the other material they had given me, including the photos and the list that went with them, to catch any mistakes and remove anything they felt uncomfortable with.

We ran out of time to review the text of the notes I had taken during the first meeting, so I met one more time with Dianne to review that text. At both of these meetings I read them lists of things I felt I had learned from them, to check my understandings. Some of this material you will find in the “what I learned from this research project” section below.

Four: Public Presentation

On February 25, 2015, we had a public presentation of our research at the Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre in the Elders’ Lounge. Garnet Meuthing brought pieces from the permanent collection. Dianne brought bannock. Mrs. Smith sewed. We screened a ten minute excerpt from the ninety minute video, Dianne talked about the pieces from the collection, and I talked about what I had learned from the project. We received good feedback and ideas for other research from the audience. At the end of March, I read my draft paper to Dianne Smith for her input, and also invited critique of the research project and brainstormed what else might be interesting to research.⁵

What I Learned about Traditional Sewing

The things I’ve written in this section draw from my reflections on what I felt I had learned from Mrs. Annie Smith and Ms. Dianne Smith in April of 2015. I have said these things in their presence and, in some cases, been gently corrected by them. This is by no means all that I have learned. I encourage readers to contact me⁶ to view the video and hear these women speak in their own voices. Perhaps you will learn different things than I did.

In April 2015 I noticed I had become better at sewing during this project. I was working on a series of mittens, moving from one idea to the next, improving in skill as I went. Taking up the needle and learning practical art and culture seems to make a place for me for intercultural meeting—a place for me to learn.

Technical Tips for Traditional Sewing

I have learned quite a few technical things about traditional sewing. Here are two examples. If you hold a piece that you're beading between your left thumb and forefinger, it's easier to find the right spot to come through the back with the needle. This hold serves as a kind of landmark. It also keeps your piece rigid and straight so that the needle goes through more easily. You push up with the needle and down with the piece at the same time.⁷

In general, you want to hide the thread. There is a layer of leather sewn between the front and the back of the mitten (sometimes called a welt). Its main job is to hide the thread. The leather piece and beadwork surrounding the top seam of moccasins has the same purpose. The beads over the threads that are used to attach the mother-of-pearl buttons in Betsy Smith's *Frogman Headpiece*, in the Yukon Permanent Art Collection, are used with this motivation and aesthetic. This is especially important in regalia, though all work should be done neatly and carefully.

While this project has in no way made me an expert in sewing, it gives me a sense of the expertise that's out there in the traditional sewing community. Many other research projects could be done with other people working in traditional sewing, especially the Elders that people learn from.

Mrs. Annie Smith's and Dianne Smith's Stature and Influence as Artists

When I initially approached Mrs. Annie Smith and Ms. Dianne Smith, I approached them as experts in this medium. In the course of this project I learned more about the breadth of their exposure and influence as artists. Mrs. Annie Smith's work has been collected by people as far away as France for almost fifty years. A home-tanned cushion cover beaded by Dianne Smith was on tour in Europe as part of an award-winning interior design for the Canadian *House and Home* magazine in the winter of 2015. Mrs. Annie Smith has taught sewing to countless people, including a woman in Nanaimo, who calls up Mrs. Annie Smith to buy more beaded moccasin tops from her when she has too many orders. Even at the age of 89, Mrs. Smith sewed from 7 a.m. when she got up till she went to bed at 10 or 11 p.m. My respect for Mrs. Smith and Dianne as artists, and for the extent of their art careers, has deepened as I've learned more about them.

I've also grown in respect for traditional sewing as an art form. Now when I see Mrs. Angela Sidney's gloves on the wall in the college library, they draw me in to look more closely at them, and I see more in them. They talk to me differently now. But in addition to each piece as

its own artwork, Dianne Smith had a lot to say about the cultural roles of traditional sewing.

Traditional Sewing and Cultural Continuity, Linking Past and Future

At our first meeting with the pictures, Dianne talked about the old trade routes with the coastal people, how women here in what's now called the Yukon tanned hides and furs and prepared beautiful things to trade. Mrs. Smith met the tourist trains in Carcross with her small handmade change purses when she was a young girl. When the highway came through, soldiers and highway workers over-hunted. It disrupted the way men could earn a living. Women stepped in, earning money selling their sewing to the influx of newcomers.

Although this was in some ways an adaptation to changes in their world, it was also a continuation of old ways of making a living. Preparing beautiful things for a craft fair or for a seasonal influx of tourists is not that different from preparing for summer or seasonal trading meetings. In this way, Yukon First Nations women have maintained a kind of cultural continuity in the face of the Canadian government's actions to take their culture away by means of residential schools and other assimilation policies. It seems to me that the women who practice traditional sewing are quiet heroes of cultural continuity.

Although it's called "traditional sewing," and its connection to traditional culture is very important, Indigenous traditional sewing should not be dismissed as an art form from the past. It plays an important part in today's world. The *Walking With Our Sisters* project is one example of how women are using this art form to address today's injustices (Yukon Arts Centre, 2015). Dianne works at Kwanlin Dun's Jackson Lake Wellness Program (Kwanlin Dun First Nation, 2016). If participants are interested, she teaches them sewing as part of their journey towards wellness. In this way she also applies this artwork to the problems of today's world. Furthermore, all over the Yukon, people make regalia for graduations (Council of Yukon First Nations, 2015), celebrating young people and their future clothed in their culture and community. In a CBC interview, Mrs. Emma Alfred emphasized the importance of correctly identifying items of traditional sewing in museums for the younger generation today (CBC, 2015a).⁸ The Na-Cho Nyak Dun First Nation recently published a book on historical and contemporary Northern Tutchone beadwork "to have it documented for younger people to be able to learn in the future" (CBC, 2015b; Na-Cho Nyak Dun First Nation, 2016). Traditional sewing is about the present and future, connected in a healthy way to the past.

Money Economies and Other Economies

Traditional sewing takes part in the money economy as well as in other non-money systems of exchange. One important way it connects to the money economy has been to get supplies for a family out on the land, out on the trap line, ice fishing, or for gas money to go moose hunting. Dianne told me her mom would just sew and sew, and put that money away so that she could support her family in the kind of life and education that being out on the land offers. Also, the moose hide, if you home tan it, becomes a valuable addition to the sewing “business.” Dianne refers to sewing as a “career,” and it is. Making your living with traditional sewing also offers a flexible schedule. This makes it easier to get out on the land than if you’re tied into a job. Traditional sewing supports cultural continuity in this way, too. Food from the land is an important thing in Mrs. Annie Smith’s house. Our first paid meeting was put off because a moose needed to be looked after.

It’s a challenging way to make money, considered as a ratio between the hours it takes to sew and what you can sell the sewing for. “Orders” or commissions play a big part in the way traditional sewing is made and sold. That way, the artist does not have to lose a cut of the price to a gallery or shop. Mrs. Annie Smith and Dianne both supported their families with income from their beadwork (Keevil, 2008). At the public presentation of our research, Mrs. Smith’s youngest daughter Rose Smith insisted that I must tell how her mother raised her on income from her sewing career. Mrs. Smith’s family is justifiably proud of her ability to make a living this way.

Tourism has played an important role in providing a market for traditional sewing. Dianne said that the word “Yukon” beaded onto Mrs. Kitty Smith’s doll suggests it was made for a tourist audience. Nevertheless, Dianne sees Mrs. Kitty Smith’s doll as representing a “spokesman for his people.” Work made for the tourist market can still be meaningful.

Dianne Smith, who has taken a variety of leadership roles over the years and represented her family during land claims negotiations, does not do a lot of sewing for the money economy nowadays. She mostly makes potlatch gifts and graduation regalia. Her family makes a vest for each new chief, following her late sister Leslie McDiarmid’s feeling that this was important. In these ways, traditional sewing participates in and adds value to the non-money economies of her family and culture.

Teaching

Mrs. Annie Smith and Dianne Smith talked about how in the old days, people did not share patterns—they stayed in a family. A flower pattern is a kind of signature, passed on through related girls. But Dianne and Mrs. Smith will teach anyone how to sew, Indigenous or not. They feel that it will help you support your family, and that you will probably teach someone else to do it too, and that is a good thing. You will see Mrs. Smith's patterns in younger women's work, and the story in that, is that she is their teacher.

Mrs. Smith and Dianne belong to an impressive family. Mrs. Smith had nine daughters and one son, and everyone in their family knows how to sew. Even the youngest siblings, Rose Smith and John Smith, who do not sew as much as the others, speak about sewing with confidence. Mrs. Smith sews in the midst of her family. They support her in this, and she supports them as well.

In Mrs. Smith's family, traditional sewing can be and often is done by more than one person. Dianne Smith spoke about how she and her sisters "use" her brother John to sew linings.⁹ Dianne draws paper flower patterns for for her mom's beadwork, and when she was a girl, also did so for her grandma Mrs. Patsy Henderson. Mrs. Annie Smith and Dianne sewed a beaded coat together for Dianne's father. Dianne tells a story about her sister and her husband making gauntlet mitts together to earn Christmas money. Working on these things together strengthens family relationships. Dianne explained to me, "It brings our family closer when we sew together. Our children are there with us. It draws their interest to do their own sewing or carving whatever craft they want to get into" (personal communication, February 19, 2015). Even at the age of three and four, Mrs. Smith's great-great-granddaughter Kalea Smith made beaded necklaces and key chains to give away at her great-great-grandpa's headstone ceremony, working alongside Mrs. Smith (personal communication, March 30, 2015).

Dianne makes the point that the timing for teaching children or other people is set by the learner, not the teacher. You don't make someone sit down and do beadwork; you wait until they're ready and they express an interest. Then you support them in that.¹⁰

Dianne stressed that she doesn't pick the colours for her students. She teaches them to use patterns both for the beading and for the moccasin, so that they learn how to produce quality work. But then the colour choice is up to them. That motivates them to complete their work. If she picks their colours, they will not finish it.

Tlingit Designs in Beadwork

Where beadwork includes coastal designs, those designs are often drawn by men, and it's important to include their names as co-artists on the work. Like many Yukon First Nations peoples, Mrs. Smith's family has coastal connections. They belong to the Crow moiety, but also can wear the Frog. That is why her sister Betsy beaded the *Frogman Headpiece* that's in the Yukon Permanent Art Collection.

When the potlatch and other ceremonies were illegal, Yukon First Nations people couldn't use coastal styles because these were associated with that kind of cultural activity. Dianne explained that Mounties could come and arrest you for using those designs. However, flowers were okay, so they used that kind of pattern. Today, beadwork that uses those coastal designs are an important expression of the freedom to use them, which didn't always exist. That's part of the story, when you see coastal designs used in beadwork and regalia today.

How to Look at Traditional Sewing

Dianne was happy to speak from personal experience about sewing by people she was related to, but much more cautious about talking about people she didn't know. Her stories about being a child around her grandparents Mrs. Kitty and Mr. Billy Smith, while they carved, are very beautiful. Being around those two working as artists seems to have given her treasured memories.

It seems like it's very important to talk to individual artists about what stories are behind their work. For example, you can talk to fifteen First Nations artists for whom the number four has a particular symbolic meaning, and numbers won't mean much at all for the sixteenth.

It can also be good to talk to an artist's students or daughters, whose voices are part of the sewing world around her. Dianne is, of course, my main example for this, but it can also be found in the *Sewing Our Traditions* catalogue. Alice Anablak's daughter Bessie says that "making traditional dolls seemed to be her mother's way of saying 'keep the traditions alive'" (Yukon Arts Centre, 2010, p. 48). There is a lot of value in including a voice from inside the artist's art world, especially someone close to them.

Dianne said, "your sewing says a lot about you." It's a way of making an identity, of showing the world what kind of person you are. You choose what kind of flowers you're inspired by, that you've imagined, or seen out on the land. Your sewing might say something about who you are as a First Nations person and who you learned sewing from. It speaks through the choices you've made in the design, in the quality of your work, in your

colour choices, and in how much patience and care you've put into it. "You don't know people until you see their beadwork," she says (personal communication, February 19, 2015).

Dianne also emphasizes the artistic side of sewing. For herself, she does not repeat her designs. They are one of a kind. She said that Elders had told her not to approach it as a job. She emphasizes that the feelings you put into the work are expressed through your artwork.

Dianne often says "there has to be a right and a left" and it took me awhile to understand that what she meant was not simple symmetry. Two identical things on either side of an axis do not have the sense of right and left. And for Dianne, perfect mirror symmetry is not necessarily the goal. You can have two moccasin tops, one with four flowers and one with five, and it still can have the feeling of right and left. She identifies perfect symmetry with Northwest Coast style imagery, but for floral work, she has a more organic way of looking at these things. Because in traditional sewing, you are often making mittens, moccasins, mukluks, or even a vest, all these things have right and left sides, which you have to take into consideration as you design them.

Both Mrs. Smith and Dianne emphasized that sewing is something you do with your mind. The design has to be completed in your mind before you start. Then you will struggle less with your work, and you will be happy with the result.

Accomplished artists in this medium have very high standards for their work. Even Mrs. Smith still unpicks things if she isn't satisfied with them, even if Dianne can't see a flaw. If someone sews something for Mrs. Smith and she isn't satisfied, she will wait until they're gone and unpick it and do it again.

Dianne's Reflections on the Research Process

Dianne felt that this research project gave good and useful information to the YPAC. She liked how the video showed the sewing, the colour coordination, and how you design in your mind before you start. She always encourages the people she teaches to write about where the design came from. She feels this is an important thing to do.

She felt that the project could be improved by making a video with more footage of actual sewing, that showed how to pick up beads and how to sew them down, and included a list of proper-sized needles, the right thread, and the proper tools to use. It seems to me that, for her, talking about traditional sewing cannot be separated from the knowledge of how to do it well.

Needle, Bead, and Voice Continues

This project has enjoyed an ongoing life in academic as well as Yukon arts and heritage circles. I presented this paper at the ACUNS student conference in November 2015 in Calgary, as I had promised to do when I applied for the ACUNS Northern Resident Award. We planned to bring Annie and Dianne down to Calgary to teach a sewing workshop leading up to the conference. Unfortunately, illness in their family prevented this from happening. Instead, I offered a beading workshop of my own, using the techniques and materials I've been practising with over the past year. It was the most subscribed workshop of the conference.

Annie, Dianne, and I presented the short video and spoke about the research project in downtown Whitehorse, as part of the Yukon Arts Centre's series of art talks at the Old Fire Hall (Yukon Arts Centre, 2016). This talk was attended by Sheila Joe of the *Champagne* and Aishihik First Nation, and she instigated an invitation for us to come to the Da Kų Cultural Centre in Haines Junction to present the full ninety-minute video interview. Copies of these videos were left with their heritage department.

Having brought this information out to Calgary, it seemed even more important to bring it even deeper into the Yukon. I presented "Needle, Bead, and Voice" at the Myth and Medium conference hosted by the Tr'ondėk Hwėch'in First Nation in Dawson City in February 2016. I explained the research process, screened the ten-minute version of the video interview, and facilitated a discussion with Dawson City bead workers about traditional sewing as an art form. This presentation included a lot more laughter than the ten-minute PowerPoint in Calgary!

Finally, with a satisfying sense of completing a circle, the ten-minute version of the video interview has been included in the online version of the Yukon College Preservation of Traditional Knowledge course. My PowerPoint presentation from Calgary formed the basis of the online lecture to accompany that week's learning. "Needle, Bead, and Voice" lives on.

Conclusions

When discussing "the future of Native-White relations in the Yukon" in 1991, Ken Coates observed that there are "few indications that the non-Native population feels it has much to learn from the Indians in the Yukon" (p. 248). The words we use have changed; I hope our attitudes are changing too. I undertook this project because I felt that there was much

to learn, and, in doing so, found that there was even more to learn than I had imagined.

So for curators, there are wonderful stories around traditional sewing. If you can find ways to bring these voices into your exhibits, it will make them richer for all viewers. I think the Yukon Permanent Art Collection, the people of the Yukon, both First Nations and non-First Nations, are richer for having not only Mrs. Smith's dolls, and the stories Dianne tells in the video, but the sound of her and Dianne laughing together. If you have an artist who is shy about talking about her work, try seeking out a daughter or a student to talk about her work. In an exhibition, the curator should find ways to include these voices.

And for people in general, but especially for Yukoners, I think we should know the name of the person who made our mittens or slippers. I am ashamed to admit I don't know who made the mitts I got for Christmas my first year in the Yukon. But you wouldn't have a painting that way. Knowing the name is a good start towards knowing a story.

Doing research in one's own community, the act of asking questions can often result in change. In asking these questions, I was part of instigating more recruitment for the Friends of Yukon Permanent Art Collection board. Ken Anderson joined the board with his expertise in carving. Lori Young, who grew up in her mom's craft shop,¹¹ brings her knowledge and experience of traditional sewing to the board's decisions.

It's considered good practice to bring research back to the community it came from. When northerners can do research in their own communities, this can happen more readily. It was easier for me to create or connect with opportunities to present this research in meaningful ways because I make my life here. Most of the events listed above in section four, would have been much more difficult to arrange from a distance. Since the end¹² of the more formal part of our research project, my relationship with Annie and Dianne has grown more personal than professional. I am a neighbour; I can walk to Annie's house from my house. I am honoured that I get to do so. I bring blueberries and we visit. I bring my sewing, or my questions when I get stuck. I continue to learn from these women, whom I respect highly. I am very grateful for this.

Author

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Notes

1. Krista Reid offered me a reduced rental rate for use of the Elders' Lounge for our presentation, and later in conversation with the KDCC's CEO, waived the rental fee as a way of supporting the Kwanlin Dun Elders involved. KDCC also provided tea and coffee to support this project, which they saw as cultural programming for the centre. We also explored having Mrs. Annie Smith and Dianne offer a sewing workshop in conjunction with this presentation, but surgery on Dianne's wrist resulted in us letting that opportunity go by. KDCC could put this research project to work as cultural programming. In my opinion, this is a sign of its success.
2. I was thankful to also receive support for this research from the newly created Yukon College Research Fund (YCRF). Applying to this fund was another phase of preparation. I had planned to pay the elders' honoraria out of my ACUNS award, but the YCRF made it much easier for me. To apply to that fund, I completed the online tutorial in research ethics put out by the Tri-Council Research Ethics Board. Their teachings would suggest that paying elders to participate in research is unethical. These ethics come out of a southern research context and attempt to apply very widely generalized science-based principles to all research projects. It is a recurring theme of northern research that such constructs designed in the South often do not fit up here. It will be interesting to see how this conundrum plays out as northern research grows at Yukon College. For projects like this, the "Protocols and Principles for Conducting Research with Yukon First Nations," published by the Yukon Research Centre, contains a much more useful ethical framework (2013).
3. Curator of *Sewing Our Traditions*.
4. Mrs. Marge Jackson was Mrs. Smith's favourite auntie, and they attended craft shows together.
5. To Kwanlin Dun First Nation and to the files at the Yukon Permanent Art Collection, I gave packages that include both videos, a list of topics covered in the longer video, the photos from Mrs. Smith's photo album and the list of notes that goes with them, the notes from our first interview, and my paper, along with a document outlining procedures to obtain permissions to use this material. I also screened the 90 minute video for the Friends of Yukon Permanent Art Collection before this year's jurying process and submitted one page summaries of this research project to the Kwanlin Dun Elders' Council and the Yukon College Board of Governors.
6. nbauberger@yahoo.com
7. You can see this in the full-length video interview at about 50:02.
8. Starting at 8:50 in the recorded interview.
9. These are comparatively easy to sew.

10. This has played out in my own family. As of March 2015, my stepdaughter Ariel is currently making gauntlet mitts for her mom.
11. The Indian Craft Shop on Main Street in Whitehorse, YT.
12. Not entirely the end—permissions for publication of the videos and other research materials are still directed to me, and I ask Dianne.

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