



Dyani White Hawk is a painter and mixed media artist who grew up in Wisconsin and lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She is Sičangu Lakota with European American ancestry. Her art is inspired in form and content by Indigenous art practices and Western painting, including abstract expressionists such as Mark Rothko and modernist Marsden Hartley. She is especially interested in historical work created by Native American women which emphasized abstract design, including porcupine quillwork, beadwork, Navajo textiles, and even the European-produced calico cloth that continues to be used within various Native communities for clothing and textiles. Her work focuses on small, meticulous details, whether she is beading directly onto a canvas, or painting a representation of quills across a large expanse. White Hawk views her art as both an expression of beauty and an intersection of cultures that are essential to her own identity.

Takes Care of Them is a suite of four screenprints published by Highpoint Editions: *Wówahokunǵiya | Lead*; *Wókaǵe | Create*; *Nakíčžiŋ | Protect*; and *Wačháŋtognaka | Nurture*. The work was inspired by the practice of four veterans being asked to stand and face each of the four cardinal directions during the wabléniča ceremony, a ritual welcoming adoptees and formerly fostered individuals back into the tribal community. In many Native cultures, veterans are revered as modern-day warriors, including women who serve to lead and protect their community, but who also act as creators and nurturers. White Hawk wanted to recognize all the women in her life who embodied these qualities and taught her to be a good member of a family and community. She explains:

Inspired by Plains style women's dentalium dresses, the set speaks to the ways in which Native women collectively care for our communities. Through acts of creation, nurturing, leadership, love, and protection carried out in infinite forms, our grandmothers, aunts, sisters, cousins, nieces, and friends collectively care for our communities. As a suite, these works speak to the importance of kinship roles and tribal structures that emphasize the necessity of extended family, tribal, and communal ties as meaningful and significant relationships necessary for the rearing of healthy and happy individuals and communities.

In the process of producing this series with the assistance of the Highpoint Center for Printmaking, White Hawk gave the bold color of each of the dresses a subtle texture to create the appearance of fabric or felted wool. All four dresses include carefully drawn dentalium shells around the collars, but the ornamentation for each is different, giving each dress a distinctive personality. The artist used a collage process with ribbons and paper cut-outs to create the designs that would eventually be screen printed in ink. Final touches in various metallic foils were applied after the many layers of ink were all in place. White Hawk wanted the dresses to be life-size and relatable, as though you could step inside, or envision the personalities that would embody them.

The large scale of the prints gives them a monumental quality, which is fitting for a series that honors Native women as everyday heroes.

Discussion and Activities

1. The title of this work is listed in two languages, English and Lakota. Currently, the Lakota language is spoken fluently by fewer than 3% of Lakota people.* Why do you think Dyani White Hawk chose to use a language most people will not be able to understand? How does her use of the Lakota language relate to her work as an artist?
2. What does it mean to be a warrior? Do all warriors fight in wars or can you be a warrior who fights for the rights of your community or your family? Think of someone who you consider to be a warrior. Write a list of adjectives describing them. Compare your list to White Hawk's titles for this series *Takes Care of Them* and the four prints: *Lead*, *Create*, *Protect*, and *Nurture*. Did you include any of these same words in your list? Why or why not?
3. Look closely at the image and list all of the materials that you can identify. Then watch the video from Highpoint Press on the making of [Takes Care of Them](#). Identify the different steps in creating the prints. What do you notice about the process and the materials? Does any part of it surprise you?
 - Explore some of these techniques in an artwork that you create. Perhaps you'll use markings to create a sense of texture under a color or use collage in the design of a print.
4. White Hawk views her art as both an expression of beauty and an intersection of cultures that are essential to her own identity. How do the work's materials, motifs, and style suggest the different cultures that make up the artist's identity? Watch this video of the artist for a deeper understanding (pam.to/WhiteHawkVideo).
5. Identify a traditional art or craft technique from your own ancestral background(s). You may choose to interview an older family member or someone in your community or to do research through the library and web (make sure your sources are reliable!).
 - If the materials are available to you, learn the traditional art practice and create something using this technique.
 - Create a work of art that incorporates references both to your ancestral heritage and to other parts of your identity.

*Source: [Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation](#)

