

Native American Quilts

Adopting an Artform and Making Their Own

Gwen Westerman (Lakota)

Gwen Westerman is a Dakota educator, writer and artist. She is the Director of the Native American Literature Symposium. She was appointed by Governor Tim Walz as Minnesota's third Poet Laureate in September 2021.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j9uu0gV-4sM> (4.5 mins Lakota)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4WYiLZ0Plo> (7 mins—Gwen Westerman)

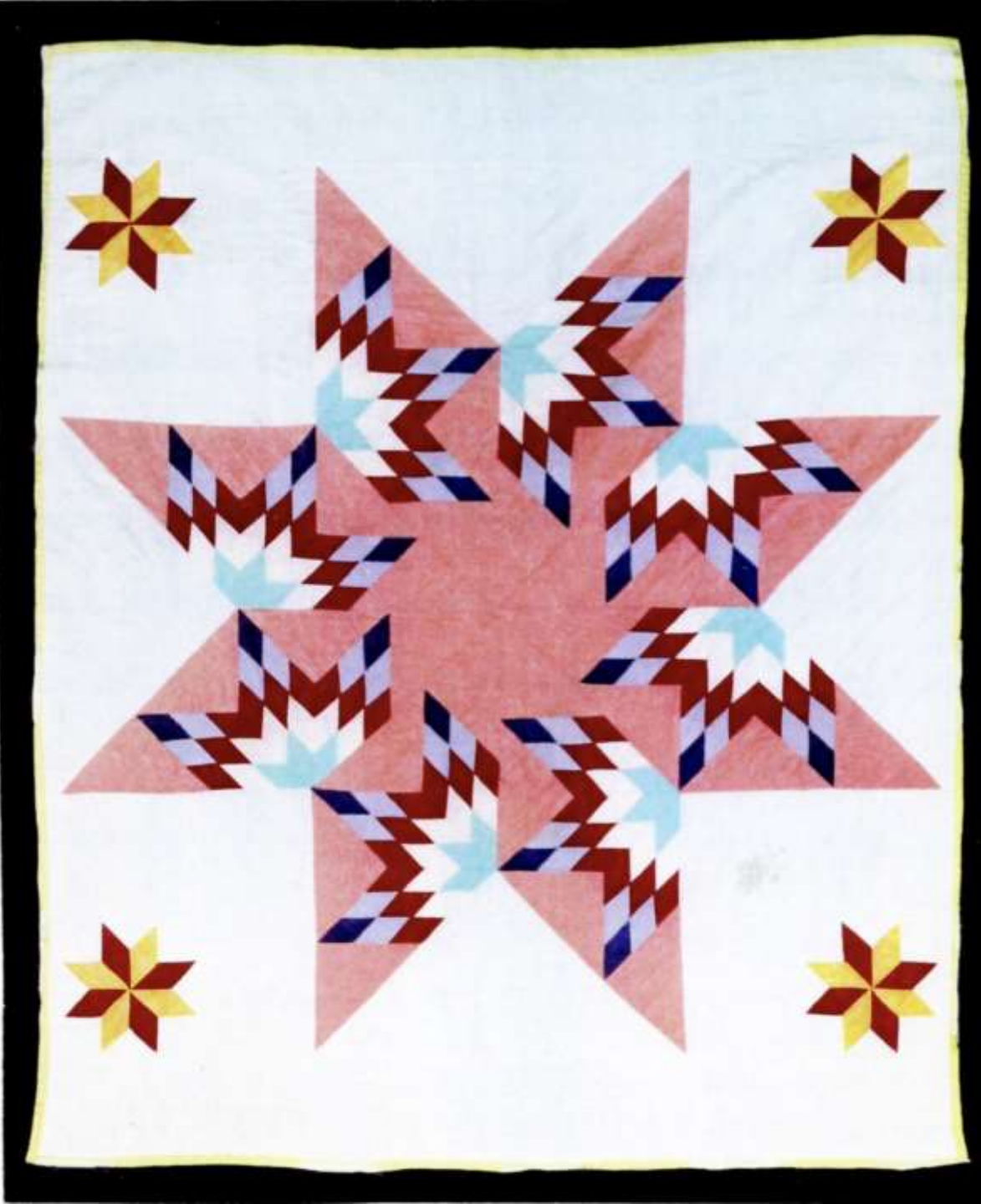
Use both

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHYKJ-qPwL8> (star quilt significance--kids)

- Lone star quilt
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KcTNT6CNddU> (significance)









Almira Buffalo Bone Jackson (Assiniboine)

Almira Buffalo Bone Jackson (1917-2004) was a member of the Red Bottom band of the Fort Peck Assiniboine and an incredible quilter. Almira made hundreds of quilts in her lifetime. Star quilts like this one were often gifts for family and friends or created to give away at social gatherings or to mark important events. Almira could create as many as two quilts in one week, but usually averaged closer to four quilts per month. This star quilt was created in 1985 as a gift for Dr. Nancy Tucker (1944-1995). Tucker, an instructor in the Native American Studies department at Montana State, remembered shopping for the quilt fabric with Almira, "She loved the brightest colors and encouraged me to add the hot pink and yellow to my favorite blues." Almira addressed her color preferences in a 1994 interview, saying "There are colors I like, some I don't like. I mix them up with colors I like. I have no favorite color. I love them all. And I notice white people like browns and rusts.... My friend [Florence Pulford], she brings me all these colors.... To me, those are ugly, and I have to just tell her. And she brings me just gobs of them too, at a time. Just piles! And I say, 'How come you never bring Indian colors?' 'These are Indian colors.' 'Oh, no, they're not,' I say. 'An Indian woman would drop dead before she'd use any of those on her star quilt!'"





Hopi Quilting

The best known quilters in the southwestern United States are the Hopi, who have a long history of producing beautiful cotton and wool blankets, robes, belts, and ceremonial sashes. Traditionally, men were the weavers among the Hopi, their looms set up in kivas, or ceremonial chambers.

From the 1880s on, quilting was embraced by both Hopi women and some men, and over the past century it has become a fixture in Hopi society. Hopi women quilt for many of the same reasons as other women - for wedding and baby gifts, for family use, for personal satisfaction, and in some cases, to sell. While many typical American quilt patterns are evident - "crazy quilt," "log cabin," "nine-patch" - a uniquely Hopi aesthetic is expressed through the use of katsina or butterfly imagery, for example, and pottery and basketry motifs.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1ROVwbpgA8>







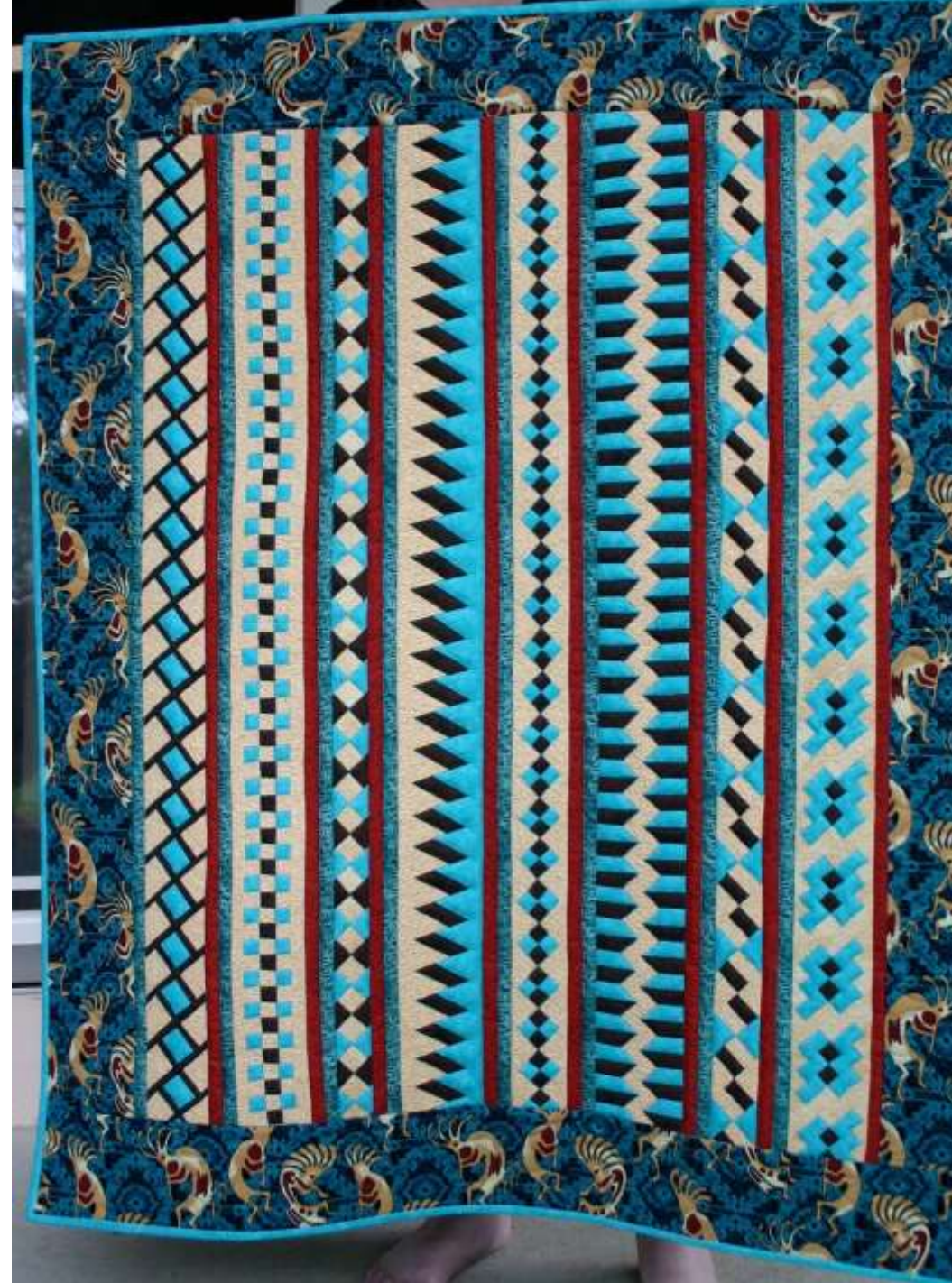
Seminole Patchwork

Seminole patchwork, referred to by [Seminole](#) and [Miccosukee](#) women as Taweekaache (*design* in the [Mikasuki language](#)), is a [patchwork](#) style made from piecing colorful strips of fabric in horizontal bands. Seminole patchwork garments are often trimmed with a [rickrack](#) border. Early examples of this technique are known from photographs in the 1910s, and its use by Seminole women in garment construction began to flourish in the 1920s. Seminole patchwork has historically been an important source of income for many Seminole women, and today remains a source of cultural pride. Fashion designers, including [Donna Karan](#), have been criticized for their appropriation of this patchwork style.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-BVZZscpRLo> (10 mins)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V4SLkFr4fk4> (museum patchwork pieces)









Susan Hudson (Navajo)

For **Susan Hudson**, a member of the Kin Yaa aanii (Towering House People) Clan of the Navajo Nation who lives on the Sheep Springs on the Navajo Reservation in New Mexico, the thing she has reclaimed is not a verbal slur, however. The thing she has reclaimed is quilting.

For more than 100 years following the Civil War, many Native American children were forcibly removed from their families and taken to attend remote Indian boarding schools, run by the government or religious organizations. The focus of these compulsory schools was the assimilation of the children into Anglo-European culture.

Students were given a basic academic education, but were forced to give up their indigenous identities and cultures. They were severely punished if caught speaking their native languages. Their Indian names were replaced with Anglo names and they were given American haircuts and required to wear uniforms or American clothes. Physical, mental, and even sexual abuse were not uncommon in the schools.

Things began to change only in 1976, after the U.S. Congress passed the 1975 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act and by 1990, when Congress enacted a law to protect Native languages, tribal involvement in education had become the norm. Most boarding schools were closed.

Both Susan's grandmother and mother had been forced to attend Indian boarding schools and one of the things they were made to do was make quilts. They were beaten if their stitches were not small enough or if they made mistakes. "I asked my grandmother if they got to use the quilts they made on their beds to keep warm and she said no," says Susan. "She told me the school would sell the quilts, but the girls never saw any of the money. So basically, it was child labor."

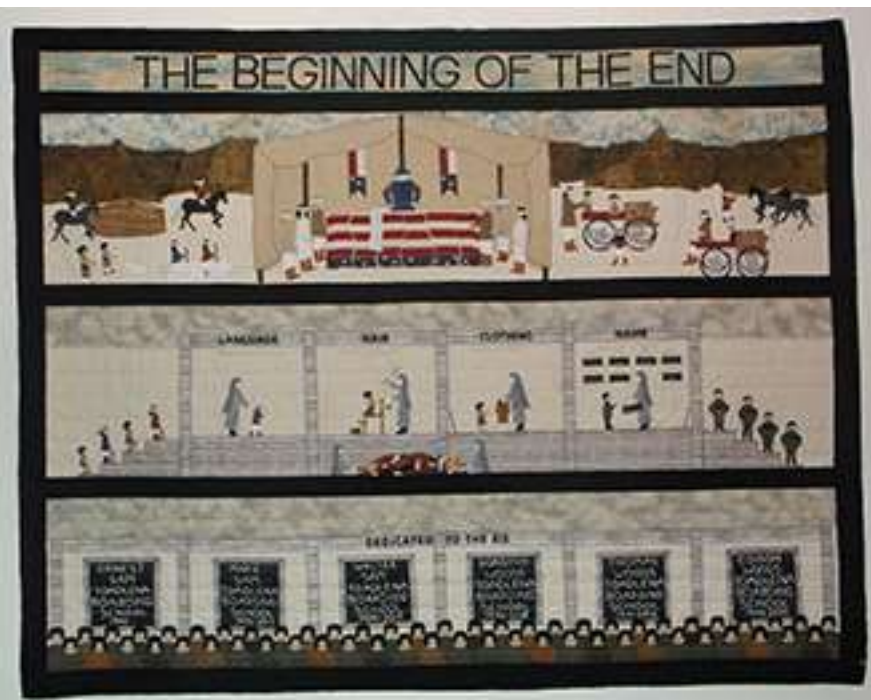
Susan comes from a long line of Navajo artists, including Master Weaver Mary Ann Foster, Master Weaver Hastiin Klah (who inspired the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian in Santa Fe, New Mexico), and many well-known jewelry makers.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kEDLOaDKyzI> (Susan Hudson boarding school)

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sLi4yP1p3Q> (Susan Hudson codetalkers Use first)







Carla Hemlock (Mohawk)

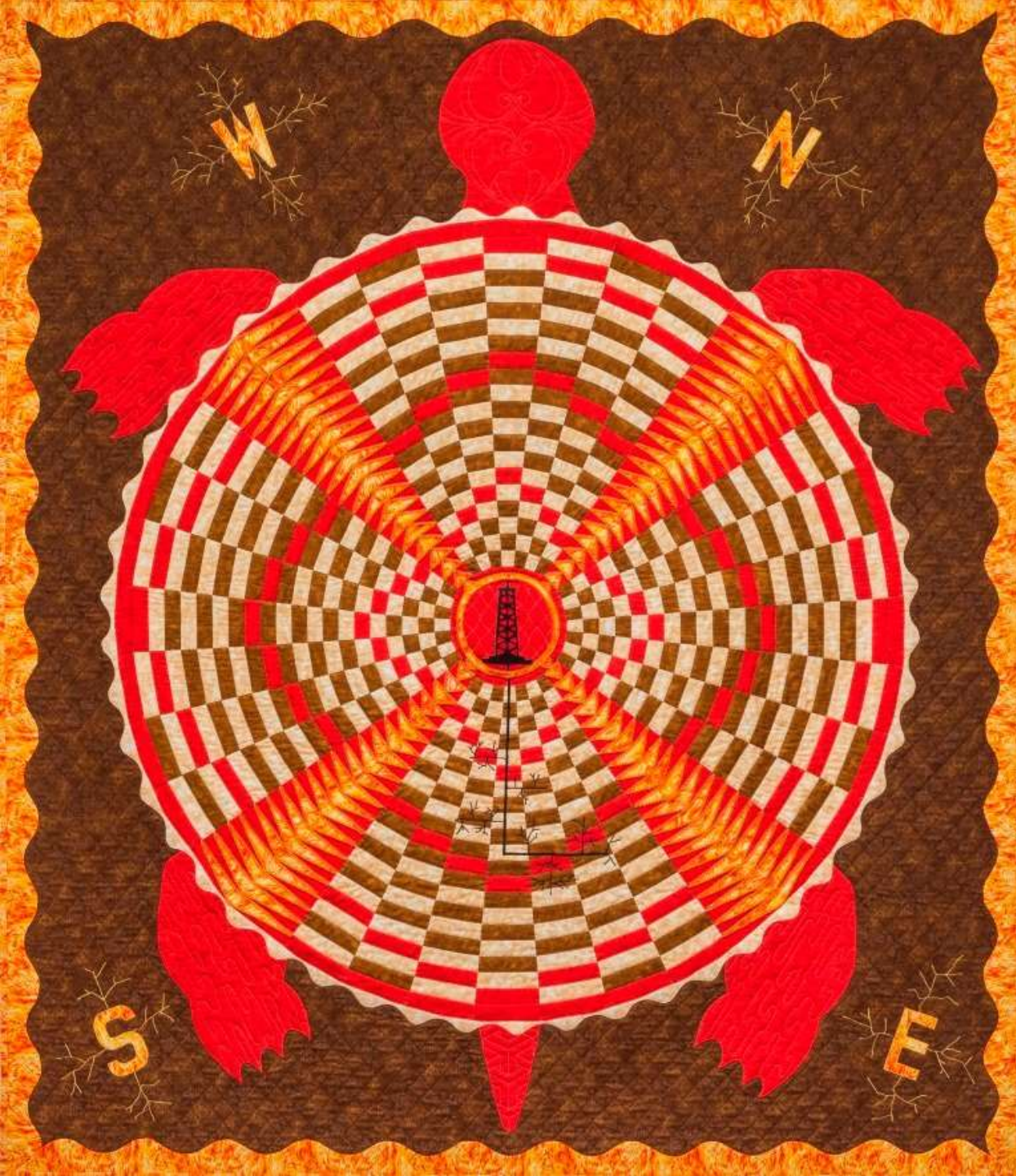
Babe and Carla Hemlock are a Kahnawake Mohawk husband-and-wife artisan team from Kahnawake Mohawk Nation Territory near Montreal. Babe specializes in woodcarving, and Carla focuses on textile arts; however, they work in a range of different artistic media.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-kx-V4KTFuI> (6 mins)

- <https://www.craftinamerica.org/artist/carla-hemlock> (3 mins)









Assignment Suggestions...

- Create an artwork that is inspired by the star quilt pattern
- Create an abstract artwork inspired by Seminole patterns
- Create an artwork that tells a story
- How bout a turtle?