

Shan Goshorn
AHHA Statement

I consider myself to be an artist who starts with an idea—most frequently a human rights issue that targets Indian people—and then chooses the medium through which that idea can best be expressed. In the last ten years I have deliberately challenged myself to stretch beyond the paint, photography, and metalwork of my formal training and explore new formats and media. Surprisingly, I have found myself drawn back to the traditional crafts of my people as a powerful way to bring awareness to issues that affect native people today. My most recent interest has been in basket making.

In 2007, I realized that a creative twist on traditional basket weaving could lend itself to exploring issues that continue to affect Indian people, such as tribal sovereignty, health concerns, land ownership, removal from ancestral homelands, treaty violation, the stereotypical use of Indian names and images in commercial products, and the far reaching impact of boarding schools. Indian baskets, photographs, and documents have often been misinterpreted in the hands of the dominant white culture. Native American people have the right and the responsibility to tell their own histories.

The traditional shapes, patterns and functions of Cherokee baskets inspire my work, but I am weaving with the contemporary medium of Arches Watercolor paper. Paper (and the written word) has been used as a weapon against Native Americans in the form of treaties, ancestry rolls, laws, restrictions, and more. By creating baskets out of paper printed with a variety of these documents and photographs, my work offers an opportunity to re-examine history from another point of view.

Shan Goshorn is the recipient of 2014 Native Arts and Culture Foundation Fellowship, Eiteljorg 2013 Contemporary Art Fellowship, 2013 Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship and 2013 SWAIA Discovery Fellowship.