

WINTERTHUR



Winterthur/University of Delaware  
Program in Art Conservation



### Treatment Proposal

This proposal picks up from the condition report  
completed by Margalit Schindler on 11/4/2019



BT, Front, Normal Illumination, photo credit:  
Margalit Schindler



BT, Back, Normal Illumination, photo credit:  
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**Accession #:** 1968.0065

**Object:** Wall Pocket

**Object Date:** 1850-1880

**Place of Origin:** Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia, Canada

**Artist/Author:** Mi'kmaq Tribe

**Materials:** Wood, birch bark, porcupine quills, spruce root

**Dimensions:** Height: 15.1 cm

Width: 13.5 cm

Depth: 5.5 cm

**Owner:** Winterthur Museum

**Permanent Location:** 3<sup>rd</sup> floor Needlework Study, Cabinet I, Shelf 1

**Reason for Treatment or Examination:**

This object is due to be treated since the last treatment in 1986.

**Examined by:** Sean Billups

**Consulted:** Lauren Fair

**Report Date:** 7/6/2021

## Previous Treatment

This object has gone through several previous treatments, summarized below. (See Appendix A for associated photography).

A 1981 examination notes and treatment report provided by Laurie Booth:

### Description, Condition, Analysis

The document lists several structural damages including missing tacks, warped apron, lost stitching, broken finial and damaged rope used for hanging. Aesthetic issues included a coating of shellac (confirmed with UV examination and solvent testing), dirt and grime overall, damaged quills (missing, broken, deteriorated, insect damage, faded original dyes).

### Treatment

1. Dust vacuumed
2. Shellac and accompanying grime was removed with 50-50 solution of ethanol:acetone using a combination blotting paper/Japanese paper pulp poultices + cotton swabs
3. Disintegrating quills consolidated with a 10% solution of Acryloid B-72 in diethyl benzene
4. Structurally insecure quills were reattached/ consolidated with 30% w/w solution of polyvinyl acetate AYAA in toluene
5. 4 strips of toned japanese tissue have been adhered between the wraps of the spruce root, from the front to the back panel.

The report then lists treatment items to be completed at a later date:

1. Reattach finial
2. Replace missing quills in the “background” i.e. areas where replacement quills would be adhered directly to birchbark
3. Construct a plexiglass support so the wall pocket is stabilized and supported, object can be handled and displayed without touching the piece itself

The next report in the object folder is an incident report from 4/17/1985, which states that the neck/finial broke at the site of a previous repair, and then fell, causing further damage to quills. However, there is no interim report that describes the initial finial reattachment and quill replacement treatment.

After the incident and subsequent damage, K. Berrett retreated the object in 1986, and documented both the old system of finial reattachment and the new, more stable system of reattachment (fig. 5). The report noted that the incident was two-fold, 1. The hanging cord tied around neck broke and 2. the old repair “failed to provide adequate reinforcement,” as it used “heavy reinforcement outside the plane of stress,” and had a support on the back only.

### Treatment

1. Previous restoration removed using acetone
2. Bamboo splints were inserted parallel between two layers of bark, adhered with B-72
3. Front and back of break area reinforced with Reemay
4. Reverse surface was inpainted using acrylic paints
5. Front surface was compensated using NEW porcupine quills, selected and cut to match – adhered with PVA in acetone

6. Upper left corner of basket was reinforced by lacing and tying with nylon monofilament (fishing line), tied through existing holes
  - a. This monofilament is tied through both back panel layers, but does not connect to the front panel

### **Treatment Proposal**

1. Surface clean overall using a HEPA vacuum and brush to remove dirt, especially from within the pocket.
2. Remove old monofilament repair by cutting.
3. Use toned cotton thread to reattach the proper left side of the front panel to the back panel. Sew through the existing top holes.
4. Assess the originality and possible locations of detached quills
  - a. Compare original and replacement quills under UV light
5. After discussing with the curator, consider reattaching the two detached quills.
  - a. They are currently at risk of dissociation.
  - b. If curator does not want to reattach, keep them in polyethylene bag and attach to custom housing, described below.
6. Build custom storage tray to aid in handling the object without direct contact.
  - a. Discuss with Linda Eaton, Senior Curator of Textiles, who manages the Needlework Study Storage.