

# The Virtual Coe

*Being together while being apart....*

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March 19, 2021

*It just takes one swing...*





Although tall and slender, don't let its looks mislead you. Ted Coe was drawn to this powerful tool for a reason.

With one quick strong swing, this knob can knock anyone down. **Zulu** warriors were known to have carried this handy friend with them for hunting, protection, and fighting, though it was also used as a weapon by many other tribes in Southern Africa.

The *iwisa* club, along with the stabbing *ikiwa* spear, were vital weapons for the Zulu warrior; knowing how to handle and when, required extra practice and strength—both physically and mentally. To make an *iwisa* club required expert craftsmanship and patience, a practice not suitable for the feeble.

Extracted from a specific tree—most likely ironwood (*olea capensis*), with the world's heaviest and hardest wood—its sap was the secret to its formation. Enwrapping the freshly carved stick with this magic goo acts as the glue to ensure sturdiness and longevity, leaving a beautifully varnished finish. At times, the sap would dry after one or two months. Other times, it would take up to a year. Once dried, the stick had become an *iwisa*.

Learn more about this piece [here](#).

Artist Unknown (Zulu, South Africa), *Iwisa Club (Knobkerrie)*, late 19th/early 20th c. Wood and wire wrap, 26.25 x 2.75 in. AF0055

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***Delicately articulated diamonds....***



Most of the population in the **Fond du Lac Denesuline First Nation** are of Dene and Metis descent. There are approximately 2300 members, 900 living on their Reserve, and 1300-1400 off Reserve. It is one of three Dene communities on the eastern end of Lake Athabasca in northern Saskatchewan. Fond du Lac is a fly-in community, meaning that it is only accessible by air year-round, with minimal roads even in the summer. Denesuline is a Chipewyan word meaning the original/real people.

Ted purchased this pair of moccasins in August 1993 on a driving trip from Santa Fe. Judging from his purchase records, it appears he drove first to the Great Lakes and then headed northwest and into Canada. Given the August 12 date of his visit to **Saskatoon**, it is conceivable that he

was heading to Crow Fair in Montana. He purchased these moccasins as well as a pair of mukluks (NA0479) at the **Trading Post, Saskatoon**, Saskatchewan. Saskatoon is 2195 miles from Santa Fe and 700 miles to the south of Fond du Lac Reserve.

He wrote about these moccasins: *The delicately articulated diamonds of which there are several hundred distributed across the upper cuffs and the vamps indicate a great care compared to the rather quickly executed flower designs one finds prevalent. They have a gaiety and a pearlescent character which indicates a type of arboreal warmth... Note how well the "pajama" felt liner on the raised cuffs harmonizes with the beaded designs used to border the cuff. As the shopgirl/owner of the Trading Post in Saskatoon said when I selected them, "this pair really hits it".*

To learn more, click [here](#).

Lena Adam (Dene and Metis (attrib.)), [Moccasins](#), 1992.  
Smoke tanned moose hide, red felt, flannel pajamas, and beads, 5.25 x 4.25 x 8.25 in. NA0438

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## Spotlight on SPOTLIGHT



On March 15, 2021, artist [Ian Kualii'i](#) hosted COLLECTION SPOTLIGHT. Ian is a multi-disciplinary self-taught artist of Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian)/Apache ancestry whose career spans more than two decades working in the forms of murals, large-scale cut-paper, prints, and site-specific installations. While trying to simplify his technique as a graffiti writer, Ian discovered stenciling and realized that he appreciated the “cut” more than the spray, thus finding his preferred medium – hand-cut paper. Over the past few years, Kualii'i has been in the process of transforming his



art practice to include large-scale land art prayer installations.

To watch this enriching experience, click [HERE](#).

**COLLECTIONS SPOTLIGHT** a program developed in partnership with First American Art Magazine is an interactive, online monthly experience that brings together diverse scholars and Native artists who select artworks from the Coe's collection to interpret and discuss. The virtual Zoom format also brings together attendees from diverse regions. Attendee questions are accepted throughout the experience via chat, and at the end opened to audio. These events are free and open to the general public.

Read more [here](#) as curator Bess Murphy reflects on the Coe Center's program **COLLECTIONS SPOTLIGHT**

Above: artist Ian Kualii hosts COLLECTIONS SPOTLIGHT March 19, 2020.  
Artist Unknown (Fijian), *Kava Bowl*, early 20th century. wood, 4.25 x 10 in. OC0030

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*To view past The Virtual Coe issues, please click [here](#).*

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