

Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

November 2016



Figure 1: Textile impression preserved in raw clay. Both sides have the textile impression. Textile had a very fine weave. Fiber source unknown. (THPO 2016.1.843)

Basketry has been an important Seminole craft for hundreds of years. Due to the lack of natural clay in Florida, sweetgrass (*Muhlenbergia filipes*) and Palmetto fibers collected from the Everglades and Big Cypress Swamp were used to create baskets. Once collected, these materials were dried and sewn together, and were used for a variety of tasks such as shifting flour and storing items.

Over the years the baskets have changed not only in functionality but in shape and color as well. The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum has several baskets in their collection whose manufacturing dates range from the late 1800s all the way through the present.

The Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) has recently unearthed a raw clay fragment that has a possible textile impression- the first of its kind in our collection! This artifact was found while researching the emergence of tree islands, or hammocks, in south Florida. The impressed raw clay shows the continuation of an important tradition and the presence of Seminole ancestors in Florida before the arrival of Europeans.

