

# A Tribute to Survival

## Virtual Tour Script

Welcome to MPM's *A Tribute to Survival*.

This exhibit is meant to serve as an introduction to our larger Native American galleries. The overarching message of this exhibit is that Native Americans are still here and have survived and thrived against many attempts to eradicate and assimilate them into the dominant society. The exhibit stands as a testament to their resilience.

As you explore this script, you'll notice differently colored text. The words in blue represent the Native American voice, while the words in black represent the academic voice. Highlighted portions are labels found only in the virtual tour.

Watch [The Making of Tribute](#) video.

### The First Americans

[Watch The First Americans video](#)

#### **A Large Land Mass**

“No matter which creation story you look to, you will find they all say we were put here. Whether we came from the sky or from the earth, we were placed here by the Creator.” - George Amour, Ojibwe, 1993

During the last great Ice Age, glaciers covered much of northern Europe, Asia, and North America. Sea levels then were much lower than they are now. Consequently, about 35,000 to 12,000 years ago, Northeast Asia and Alaska formed a continuous landmass across what are now the Bering Sea and the northern reaches of the Pacific Ocean. Geologists call this ancient land mass Beringia (*bear-in-jee-ya*). Beringia was about 1,500 miles across and about 1,000 miles from north to south.

A warming trend beginning about 15,000 years ago began melting the glaciers, releasing great amounts of water. This raised the sea level over all but the highest points of Beringia and separated Asia and North America about 8,000 years ago.

Some anthropologists tell us that the first people, known today as Indians, arrived in the Americas at least 12,500 years ago, and other anthropologists say it was much earlier. Because Beringia was so big, however, those who lived there as hunters and foragers would not have known they were moving from one place to another over such a long period of time. Eastward from Siberia, the first Americans inhabited Beringia, then North, and then South America.

## Original People

“In the beginning, the people of the New World, called Indian by accident of geography, were possessed of a continent and a way of life. In the course of many lifetimes, our people had adjusted to every climate and condition from the Arctic to the torrid zones. In their livelihood and family relationships, their ceremonial observances, they reflected the physical world they occupied.” - from “Declaration of Indian Purpose,” Chicago, 1961

Diverse cultures originated in the Americas. The First Americans developed their lifestyles adapting to the ecosystems of sea coasts, woodlands, plains, prairies, deserts, tropical rainforests, mountains, and canyons.

## Diverse Cultures

These three statues display a small example of the enormous diversity of cultures and lifeways of Native peoples in the Americas. From left to right:

- A man from the Amazon with blowgun and darts
- A Plains Indian with a stone spear, deerskin clothing, and a bear-claw necklace
- An Inuit individual with a kakivak ice-fishing spear, wearing a caribou fur parka

## A Case in Point

“As the anthropologists learn more, they are going to find out that we have been here for a very long time.” - Ben Bearskin, Winnebago and Sioux, 1993

The discovery of stone points, such as those found at Clovis and Folsom, New Mexico, with long distinct animals, indicate that Indians have been here at least 12,500 years.

Until well into the 1920s, it was believed by scientists that the peopling of the Americas occurred only 4,000 years ago. Then, a stone point was found near Folsom, New Mexico, in association with Ice Age animals that had been extinct for at least 10,000 years.

Later, a point of another style was discovered near Clovis, New Mexico, in an even older layer of earth. Such points have since been found at many places in North America. They are unique to North America and are unlike stone points found anywhere else in the world. Some anthropologists claim that pre-Clovis sites in North and South America date back more than 30,000 years.

As new discoveries are made, scientists must update their theories for describing the past.

## Anthropology

These and other items in this gallery come from our Anthropology department. Anthropology is the study of human societies and cultures and their development over time. The people who study the lifeways of people now and in the past are called anthropologists. [Watch the video](#) to learn how some museum anthropologists spend part of their workdays.

## The Evidence in Wisconsin

Here, you can see reproductions of fossil mammoth bones recently found in Wisconsin's Kenosha County. This fossil evidence is important because the bones, which are estimated to be about 11,000 years old, bear evidence of cut marks made by humans. In fact, there is more working of this bone than of any found at sites out west. This is the first evidence of a butchered mammoth found east of the Mississippi.

The cut marks indicate wedging to separate the ulna from the humerus of the beast. The humerus has not been found, but you can see the ulna, the radius, and several metacarpals here. In addition to mammoth, the fossil evidence indicates that paleo-Indians also hunted deer, caribou, and other smaller animals.

The artist's depiction of a mammoth butchering scene to your right, demonstrates that no part of the animal was wasted. Early Indians took as much from the animal as time, efficiency, and safety would permit. It was an enormous amount of work as the animal was about the size of today's Asian elephant. And danger, depicted here in the form of hungry wolves, always lurked.

## Sophisticated Cultures

["The first Americans had sophisticated cultures long before the Europeans stumbled upon this country." - Carol Sample, Plains Ojibwe, 1993](#)

American Indian cultures met the needs of the people in many different ways. There was great variety in the ways they attended spiritual needs, healed the sick, and expressed artistic and philosophical ideas. There was great variety in the development of tools, medicines, clothing, and building as well.

## Enrichment Through Trade

["Thousands of years ago, we were trading not only goods and materials, but also new ways of doing things." - John Clifford, Lakota Rosebud Sioux, 1993](#)

Sometimes, Indian communities couldn't find all the resources they needed locally, so they developed extensive intertribal economies. A conch shell from the Gulf of Mexico, for example, was unearthed near Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Through the exchange of ideas, language, and new ways of doing things, cultures and lifeways were enriched as well.

## Trade Routes

Native Americans had extensive trade networks before Europeans arrived. This shell was found in Sheboygan County, but originated in the Gulf of Mexico, more than 1,000 miles away.

One commonly traded item in the prehistoric Great Lakes region was copper, which was almost exclusively mined and worked in what is now Wisconsin. Explore MPM's collection of Old Copper Culture artifacts [here](#).

## Domestication

[“The Indians gave the world three-fifths of the crops now in cultivation.” - Jack Weatherford, \*Indian Givers\*, 1988](#)

About 150 different kinds of plants were eventually brought under cultivation in the Americas by native peoples, beginning in Central Mexico and the Andean highlands 6,000 to 8,000 years ago. The idea of domestication spread throughout the Americas. The number of plants domesticated in the Americas greatly exceeded the number of those domesticated in Europe, Asia, and Africa.

## Corns, Beans, and Squash

Corn, squash, and beans came directly out of Mexico into the American Southwest, where irrigation was developed in some areas, about 150 BC. Although not arriving at the same time, these crops were brought into eastern North America about 200 AD, along the Gulf of Mexico or via the Antilles. The domestication of corn required human intervention because corn's protective husk had to be removed before the kernels could be sown. Large, permanent settlements, heavily reliant on gardens, and showing Central American influences, began to develop in the Southeast. These food crops spread as far as the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River by 800 AD.

## A Fateful Encounter

[Watch A Fateful Encounter video](#)

### From the Americas to the Old World

Can you tell which of the foods you see here are gifts of Native American cultures to the world?

If you answered “all of them,” you are correct. Europeans did not know or use corn, potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, beans, or peanuts before 1492.

### From the Old World to the Americas

Can you tell which of the grains you see here come from the Old World to the Americas?

If you answered “all of them,” you are correct. Wheat, barley, and oats were not grown in the Americas before 1492.

[“But an evil day came upon us. Your forefathers crossed the great water and landed upon this land. Their numbers were small. They found us friends and not enemies. They told us they had fled from their own country on account of wicked men and had come here to enjoy their religion. They asked for small seat. We took pity on them and granted their request and they sat down amongst us. We gave them corn and meat; they gave us poison \(rum\) in return...” - Sa-go-ye-wat-ha \(Red jacket\), Seneca Chief, 1750-1806](#)

## Horses

Horses evolved in North America and, over time, travelled across the land-bridge to Asia. They went extinct in North America approximately 10,000 years ago. They were reintroduced by the Spanish in the 1500s and greatly changed life for several Native American groups. Horses quickly became a part of Native American culture and art, particularly among the Plains tribes. [Learn more about horses in Native American art here.](#)

## A Powerful Exchange

European explorers called the lands they were familiar with the “Old World.” They called the Americas the “New World.” But exchanges between these two “worlds” after 1492 changed life for everyone as people on each side of the ocean adapted new things to make them part of their own ways of life.

Some things that were carried to Europe from the Americas were corn, potatoes, tobacco, long-fiber cotton, rubber, and other plants including those used for medicines. Some things that were carried to the Americas from Europe were horses, cattle, sheep, and other domestic animals. Unfortunately, there were “stowaways” that traveled with the Europeans as well. These include rats, cockroaches, weeds, and deadly diseases.

## Epidemic Invasion

*“As the invaders were descendents of the toughened survivors of the Middle Ages, so the Indians of today descend from those who could live through the trauma of a European handshake.” - Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America*, 1975*

New diseases were also transported from the Old World to the Americas where the native peoples had virtually no immunity to this deadly invasion. The diseases often moved from tribe to tribe, decimating populations before they actually encountered Europeans in person. In North America alone, the most conservative estimates place native population loss at nine out of ten people, from roughly 4 million to 400,000 between 1492 and 1900. Other estimates calculated the loss to have been far greater, from minimally 7 million to less than half a million.

Some Indian nations mentioned in early accounts were completely destroyed, especially along the eastern seaboard. Where remnants remained, they sometimes regrouped as new tribes. All of the North American tribes of today weathered severe population losses to epidemics. The Indian population gradually developed resistance to European diseases and has been increasing since 1900.

## Daily Reminders Of Exchange

Life for everyone in Europe and the Americas is different because of exchanges between American Indian and European cultures. Many things we take for granted today would probably not exist if the exchange had not occurred. Do you know which ingredients of the popular foods you see here originally came from the Americas? From the Old World?

*Hamburger and French Fries*

Tomatoes and potatoes came from the Americas. Beef, flour, and lettuce came from Europe.

### *Taco*

Corn, chile peppers, beans, and tomatoes originally came from the Americas. Lettuce, cheese, and beef came from Europe.

### *Pizza*

Tomatoes and peppers came from the Americas. Flour, onions, and cheese came from Europe.

### *Candy Bar*

Chocolate and peanuts came from the Americas. Sugar cane came from the Old World.

### *Salad*

Tomatoes and peppers came from the Americas. Lettuce, onions, and cheese came from Europe.

## Bison Hunt

### [Hear the rattlesnake](#)

### **Buffalo Jump**

Before horses were brought back to North America by the Spanish, Plains Indians hunted on foot using a technique called a “buffalo jump.” To begin, hunters wearing bison hides or wolf skins wandered through the herd to slowly shepherd the animals toward a cliff’s edge. Suddenly, others in the hunting party appeared waving hides and shouting to panic the herd. A stampede was created sending many bison running over the cliff’s edge. Women waited below, ready to begin skinning the animals and cutting the meat. Sun-dried meat, animal hides, and other usable parts of the bison were transported back to camp using dogs pulling travois.

### **New Resources, New Lifeways**

After the reintroduction of the horse by the Spanish in the 1500s, Plains Indians began hunting bison on horseback. This large diorama shows how hunters worked together to single out a bison to kill. The long reins on the horse would allow a hunter to grab onto them and remount the horse if he should fall off during the hunt.

A skilled hunter could shoot four arrows in less than a minute or spear his target from his higher position on horseback. Bison were used to meet virtually all a tribe’s basic needs – food, shelter, clothing, and tools. As bison became scarcer and hunts became less fruitful, the Plains Indians were careful to use every part of the bison.

### **Bison Hunt On Horseback**

The kind of bison hunt you see here began with the spread of the horse across the Plains in the late 1700s. It came to an end by the late 1880s when White commercial hunters had nearly exterminated the bison, commonly called the buffalo.

Horses were introduced to the Americas by the Spaniards. Oppressive Spanish rule was extended to the southwestern Pueblos in the late 1600s. After the Pueblo groups united in a revolt in 1680, the number of horses left behind by the fleeing Spanish became wild herds from which the Indians selected mounts and pack horses. Some Indian tribes developed new breeds, such as the Appaloosa, for their specific needs.

[Hear Bison Stampede](#)

### **What Does the Bison Hide Feel Like?**

Touch this sample and find out. Bison were important to the Indians in many ways. Bison meat provided food and the hide provided clothing and blankets. Bones were tools, horns were ornaments, and sinews were used as strung. Virtually no part of the animal was wasted.

### **Bison Hunt Afoot**

Before they had horses, villagers ventured out onto the Plains by foot to hunt buffalo that supplied food, skins for tent covers, bedding, clothing, and bones and horns to make tools and utensils. In some places the people returned year after year where they had created "buffalo jumps," a corridor of rock piles funneling toward the edge of a cliff. A skilled and very brave man wearing a buffalo hide acted as a decoy, keeping a safe distance but gradually luring the curious buffalo toward the cliff. He dashed to safety as people hiding behind the rock piles jumped up waving hides and shouting to stampede the herd over the cliff. Women waited below, ready to begin skinning the animals and cutting the meat in strips to preserve by sun-drying.

### **Crow Indian Bison Hunt**

This spectacular diorama is a lasting tribute to the artistry and vision of Walter C. Pelzer, the Museum's chief taxidermist from 1932-1972. With assistance from artist William Schultz and taxidermist Harvey Mayer, Pelzer organized an expedition to Oklahoma's Wichita Mountain Wildlife Refuge to collect specimens and conduct field studies in 1961. Years of painstaking work followed before the scene--known for its dynamic action, thundering soundtrack, and famous rattlesnake--was complete.

At the time of its debut in 1966, *Crow Indian Bison Hunt* was reputed to be the largest open diorama in the world. It remains one of the Museum's most popular exhibits, beloved by visitors of all ages.

### **The European Presence**

["Our Indian life, I know, is gone forever." - Waheenee Hidatsa](#)

## A Threat To Tradition

For many American Indian groups, the European presence meant the beginning of the end to an aboriginal way of life. New items were adopted selectively and were worked into the existing patterns of tribal cultures, altering traditional roles and customs. Although this phase of coexistence with Europeans included hostilities as well as periods of peace, the tribes managed their affairs, internally and externally.

### “Soft Gold” Spurs Conflict

“Which of these is the wisest and happiest – he who labors without ceasing and only obtains, with great trouble, enough to live on, or he who rests in comfort and finds all that he needs in the pleasure of hunting and fishing? Learn now, my brother, once and for all, because I must open my heart to you: There is no Indian who does not consider himself indefinitely more happy and more powerful than the French.” - Micmac Chief, 1676

The wealth represented by furs spurred competition among European and Indian nations for control of this trade. This led to colonial and intertribal warfare. France, England, Russia, and even Spain to some extent scrambled to supply furs to an eager European market. Sumptuous furs were in demand for garments, and deer skins were sought for leather. Beaver was particularly desired because hair from beaver pelts was used to make felt hats.

### Tied up in a Balance of Power

“No person among us desired any other reward for performing a brave and worthy action, but the consciousness of having served his nation.” - (Thayendanegea) Joseph Brant, Mohawk, 1742-1807

Indians traded their furs for both practical and decorative products which they adapted to their own uses and tastes. Old hands at trade, diplomacy, alliances, and warfare among themselves, the Indian nations often held a balance of power in the Europeans’ dreams of empire. Indian nations were sought as trading partners and given goods and provisions to secure their friendship and loyalty in warfare. As they allied themselves with France, or England, or others in the European conflicts, some tribes ended up fighting each other.

[Visit MPM’s Ribbonwork of the Woodland Indians webpage](#)

## The Fur Trade

The fur trade spurred conflict, but it also spurred exchanges between two kinds of culture – the American Indian and the European. Each had different resources and different ideas about the value of those resources.

The Indians supplied the European market with abundant furs such as beaver, otter, fox, and ermine. Beaver was used to make felt for hats. Other furs were used for clothing.

“The English have no sense: They give us 20 knives like this for one beaver skin.” - A Montagnais



## Indian, 1634

The fur trade had an impact on indigenous traditions. Glass beads often replaced porcupine quills as decorations on moccasins and other clothing. German silver bearing Indian motifs was used for ornamentation on clothing and for jewelry.

“The people of the Countrie came flocking aboard, and brought us...Bever skinnnes, and Otter skinnnes, which wee bought for Beades, Knives...Hatchets, (and other) trifles.” - Robert Juet, 1609

## Fur Trade in Wisconsin

Europeans first came to Wisconsin to make money in the fur trade. They traded with Native Americans in the area and both cultures had a significant impact on each other. [Watch the video](#) to learn more about the fur trade. Then, visit MPM’s website to learn more about two fur traders from Wisconsin, [Solomon Juneau](#) and [John Baptiste DuBay](#).

## Trapped in the European Struggle for Control

There was a long time, 1689-1763, when Europeans courted Indians as allies in their struggle for control. But with the final defeat of France, the Indians were no longer necessary to the victorious English.

Disgruntled by privatization and British arrogance after their victory over France, many Indians were persuaded to follow Pontiac, an Ottawa leader who urged them to put aside their tribal differences and unite against the English.

Rumors that the French king would again fight the English prompted many tries to answer Pontiac’s call. But although his forces had defeated several British garrisons and had Forts Pitt and Detroit under siege, the French king chose to end the war.

## Cultural Exchange

In addition to food, everyday objects were also traded between Europeans and Native Americans. Snowshoes were developed by Native Americans and adopted by Europeans to travel during heavy snowfalls. Native American canoes were sold to French fur traders, and European metal was used by Native Americans to create weapons and jewelry. Bison horns were repurposed by Native Americans to hold gun powder.

Bandolier bags are one example of this type of exchange. Originally something carried by European soldiers, Great Lakes Native Americans copied the design, embellishing them with glass beads they acquired through trade. [Learn more about these bags and browse MPM’s collection of Bandolier Bags.](#)

## Squeezed Out by the European Land-Grab

“Man sometimes thinks he’s been elevated to be the controller, the ruler. But he’s not. He’s only a part of the whole. Man’s job is not to exploit but to oversee, to be a steward. Man has

responsibility, not power.” - Oren Lyons, Onondaga, 1990

In North America, competition for territory involved a handful European nations closing in on hundreds of Indian nations from many directions. Major players in this land grab were the Spanish, the French, the English, and the Russians. Attempts by the Netherlands and Sweden to establish colonies and enter the fur trade in the New England region were short-lived as England usurped their claims.

The Spanish wanted gold but took slaves and Catholic converts instead. The French wanted furs and to find a “Northwest passage” to the Pacific Ocean. The British wanted land and religious and political freedom. The Russians wanted furs.

## The Tide Of Settlement

“We did not ask you White men to come here. The Great Spirit gave us this country as a home. You had yours. We did not interfere with you. The Great Spirit gave us plenty of lands to live on, and buffalo, deer, antelope, and other game. But you have come here; you are taking my land from me; you are killing off our game, so it is hard for us to live.” - Crazy Horse

### **A Threat To The Land**

Outnumbered and outarmed, American Indian nations continued to resist loss of their land and identity. When armed resistance failed, they bargained as best they could under the circumstances to reserve small homelands and continued to thwart efforts to stamp out their culture and identity.

### **Pressured by White Settlement**

“If my warriors are to fight, they are too few; if they are to die, there are too many.” - Hendrick, Mohawk, ca. 1680-1755

Even before the Revolutionary War, English settlers were pushing west from the Atlantic Coast to occupy new land. In 1763, King George III proclaimed the crest of the Appalachian Mountains as the western boundary of English settlement. Indian land, he said, could be purchased only if the sale was agreed to between tribes and representatives of the Crown. Purchases were not to be negotiated through the colonies or individuals, reinforcing the concept of nation-to-nation relationships.

Desire by the colonies to expand into forbidden territory helped fuel the revolt against Britain. Land speculators sought out and surveyed choice parcels ahead of land sales. They anticipated that the Crown would be forced to negotiate for more land with tribes beyond the Appalachians. Settlers ignored the boundary line, setting off hostilities with Indians trying to protect their homelands and families.

## **Tecumseh Stands Against the Tide**

“Are we not being stripped day by day of the little that remains of our ancient liberty? ...We will be driven away from our native country and scattered as autumnal leaves before the wind.” - Tecumseh, Shawnee Chief, 1812

While some of the Creeks and Choctaws fought for the U.S. in New Orleans during the War of 1812, Tecumseh led an intertribal coalition in the north against the U.S.. A Shawnee, Tecumseh was an extraordinary leader who had the vision of uniting as many tribes as possible to resist the loss of their land.

Tecumseh turned to the British for support against the United States, and he and British General Isaac Brock achieved striking victories before Brock was killed in a battle in the Niagra area in 1812. Brock was replaced by the incompetent General Henry Proctor, who lost everything Tecumseh and Brock had gained. Tecumseh continued to fight until he was killed at the Battle of the Thames River north of Lake Erie on October 5, 1813.

## **Divided by War**

“At the end of the Revolutionary War, the Americans declared the Iroquois living on the American side of the United States-Canadian border defeated. Pressed from all sides, their fields burned and salted, their daily life disrupted, and the traditional power of the Matrons under assault... The recently powerful Iroquois became a subject captive people.” - Paula Gunn Allen, Laguna Pueblo/Sioux, 1989

The American Revolution may have rid the colonies of English rule, but it created tremendous problems for the Indian tribes. This was true even for those who fought on the side of the Americans.

The League of the Iroquois bordering the St. Lawrence River traditionally decided major affairs of state by consensus. The League tried to remain neutral but the tribal leaders couldn't agree on how the Revolution would affect their people. The Oneida and Tuscarora eventually allied with the Americans. The Mohawk sided with the English and although the Onandaga, Cayuga, and Seneca were officially neutral, some of those tribes sided with the English as well. When the war ended in 1783, the Mohawk tribe and other Iroquois who allied with them, relocated to Canada. The Onandaga, Cayuga, and Seneca obtained reservations in upstate New York, but the American government, urged by land companies, negotiated treaties to take most of the Iroquois lands.

## **More Land Lost**

“Sell a country! Why not sell the air, the great sea, as well as the earth?” - Tecumseh, Shawnee, 1768-1813

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 stated that the Indians' “lands and property shall never be taken from them without their consent.” But that did not prevent land speculators and settlers from pouring into the Ohio country before it had been bought from the tribes.

Tribal reaction to the taking of tribal land brought American military actions. And although the Indian nations fought successfully, they were eventually defeated in 1794 at the Battle of Fallen Timbers and forced to sell their land. The Treaty of Greenville was signed in 1795 after two months of discussion, threats, bargaining, and bribery. Leaders of 12 tribes ceded part of Indiana, much of Ohio, and the sites of Toledo, Detroit, Chicago, and Peoria for less than the equivalent of \$30,000.

### **Outnumbered And Outarmed**

“The armies of the Whites are without number, like the sands of the sea, and ruin will follow all tribes that go to war with them.” - Shabonne, Potawatomi, 1827

Even though Indians often defend their territory effectively with up-to-date weapons, their arsenal of firepower depended upon what they could get from non-Indians. As boundary disputes were settled between the United States and Canada on the north and Mexico on the south by the mid-19th century, European expansionists were no longer interested in allying with Indian nations or in supplying arms.

### **The Sioux Uprising**

This war club was acquired in Minnesota in 1865, just a few years after the Dakota War (also called the Sioux Uprising) of 1862. Due to its history and age, it is very likely that this club was used, or at least present, during the Sioux Uprising.

The Dakota people declared war on the United States in the summer of 1862 after annuity payments were repeatedly late and they were starving. Most Anglo-American men in the area were off fighting in the Civil War, so it was an opportune time for the Dakota to strike. The uprising resulted in the deaths of more than 500 American men, women, and children, and untold hundreds of Dakotas.

After the war had been quelled by the American government, 303 of the Sioux warriors involved in the conflict were sentenced to death. President Lincoln pardoned the death sentence for all but 38 of them, who were hanged in the largest public execution in the history of this country.

This bloody conflict was the first of a series of Dakota rebellions against the United States, which were finally and brutally quashed at the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890, in which up to 300 Native American men, women, and children were gunned down by the US military.

### **Indian Arms**

[Visit the Crow Gun Case MPM Webpage](#)

From top to bottom:

Trade Fusil Indian Chief,

.65 Caliber Bore  
Made by Wheeler. England c. 1800

Indian Trade Musket  
.60 Caliber Smooth Bore  
Made by Barnett, England, 1833

Indian Trade Rifle  
52 Caliber  
Made by H. Lehman., Lancaster, Pa., c. 1850's-60's  
Taken from Sioux or Cheyenne. c. 1877

Henry Lever Action Rifle  
.44 Caliber, 16 Shot Repeater  
Made in New Haven, Conn., c. 1863

Colt-Burgess Lever Action Carbine  
.44 Caliber, 12 Shot Repeater  
Made in Hartford. Conn., c. 1883

## The Myth Of The Vanishing Indian

### **Nation to Nation**

"We have a republic as well as you. The council-tent is our Congress, and anybody can speak who has anything to say, women and all." - Sarah Winnemucca, Northern Pacific, 1844-1891

"The Congress shall have the power...to regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several states, and with the Indian Tribes." - U.S. Constitution

Indian policy in both the United States and Canada was built on British colonial precedents that evolved gradually along the eastern seaboard of North America. These precedents included treaties setting aside reservations, paying tribes for land, and limiting such negotiations to representatives of the British Crown, not the individual colonies. Later, the United States Constitution made Indian affairs a responsibility of the federal government, not the individual states. A special office, now called the Bureau of Indian Affairs, was created for administrative purposes.

### **Portrait Lithographs**

The two portraits of men hanging in this case are lithographs made by artists such as Charles Bird King of Native American individuals in the 1820s-40s. While artists sometimes traveled to Native groups, these two portraits were created when these men traveled to Washington for treaty negotiations with the U.S. government. Almost all of the original paintings were destroyed in a fire in Washington. Only the sets of lithographs made from the paintings exist today. These paintings

give us a sense of what these men looked like before the advent of photography.

### **Native American Portraits**

These three paintings of Menominee men and women are housed in MPM's collection. They were painted by Samuel M. Brookes in 1858. They are invaluable records of the clothing worn and materials used by the Menominee during this period. While the men are identified on the back of the canvas, the women are nameless. Despite this, the women's painting is exceptionally rare as Native American women were rarely used as subjects in paintings.

Click the links below to learn more about each painting.

[Menominee Men](#)

[Menominee Women](#)

[Portrait of Chief Oshkosh](#)

### **Federal Policies And Indian Strategies**

["We shall learn all these devices the White Man has, we shall handle his tools for ourselves. We shall master his machinery, his inventions, his skills, his medicine, his planning; but we'll retain our beauty and still be Indians." David Martin, The New Indian, 1968](#)

Indian people adapted selectively to aspects of White American culture but showed little inclination to completely embrace white ways. Though individuals may join mainstream society, tribes want to keep their special relationship with the federal government, and Indians want to make their own decisions about their best interests. Indian people and informed non-Indians have called for policy recognizing that Indians as a people are not about to vanish.

### **A Story of Cross Purpose**

["You might as well expect the rivers to run backwards as that any man who was born free should be contented, penned up, and denied liberty to go where he pleases." - Chief Joseph, Nez Perce, 1879](#)

Federal policy generally has been based on the expectation that Indians would vanish. The Indian expectation has been to endure. For example, non-Indians saw reservations as waystations for Indians to learn non-Indian ways and leave. Indian people saw reservations as homelands where tribes could preserve tribal cultures.

In some cases, tribal leaders reserved certain land use rights preserving that heritage for future generations. The U.S. government signed these treaties in the belief that these rights would not be exercised for long because Indians would become assimilated into mainstream society. Treaty rights varied from tribe to tribe. For example, when the Ojibwe ceded their lands in northern Wisconsin and neighboring lands in Michigan and Minnesota in 1837 and 1842, they alone of all the Wisconsin tribes, reserved the right to fish, hunt, and use other resources in the ceded areas. After they were settled on reservations, the Ojibwe maintained they never gave up these rights

and finally won their case in the courts.

### **Wisconsin: Crossroads of Federal Policy and Indian Responses**

“Brothers! I have listened to a great many talks from our Great Father. But they always began and ended in this – ‘Get a little farther; you are too near to me.’ I have spoken.” - Chief Speckled Snake, Creek, 1928

THE REMOVAL POLICY – Most of the tribes in the eastern United States were removed to the “Indian Territory” west of the Mississippi in the 1830s. Wisconsin tribes also were scheduled for removal as White settlements pushed westward. A great intertribal treaty council was held in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin in 1825, supposedly to maintain peace, but really to get tribal agreement on their boundaries to expedite land cessions. By 1848, the year Wisconsin became the 30th state, most tribal land in Wisconsin had been ceded except for the reservation granted the Oneida in 1838.

THE REMOVAL POLICY ABANDONED – In 1849, the U.S. government generally abandoned the removal policy in favor of location reservations in the small areas of the vast tracts the tribes had ceded. Hostilities had begun with the Plains tribes, making it impractical to move any more eastern tribes west of the Mississippi. Most of the reservations in Wisconsin today were created by treaty during the 1850s.

### **What is the Total American Indian Population in the United States?**

According to the most recent census information, there are 1,989,234 American Indian people living in the country, including Inuit and Aleuts.

### **How Many American Indians Reside in Wisconsin?**

The most current census shows that there are 38,986 American Indians living in the state today.

### **How Many American Indian People Live in Milwaukee?**

There are at least 8,000 people, including families, in both the city and the suburbs. Most of the people included in this number are Wisconsin Indians. There are many intertribal offices and organizations in the general Milwaukee area which were formed to service a wide variety of social concerns such as health, employment, education, spiritual, and cultural matters. It is important to remember that reservations and tribal land aren't the only places that can be termed “Indian Country.” Indian Country is anywhere American Indians gather or live. In Wisconsin, there are Indians living throughout the state in suburban, rural, and urban areas. Milwaukee is Indian Country.

**Do you know which Wisconsin reservations were not created by treaty?**

The Forest County Potawatomi Reservation. Potawatomi bands in the Milwaukee-Waukesha area resisted removal west in 1833 and finally made their way to northern Wisconsin where they were granted a reservation in Forest County in 1913.

The Mole Lake or Sakoagon and the St. Croix Chippewa. Their reservations were established in 1934. They were supposed to have been included in the treaty of 1854 which created the other four Chippewa reservations.

**Do you know what Eastern tribes moved to Wisconsin?**

The Stockbridge-Munsee, made up of remnants of many eastern tribes, and Brothertown. They joined a group of Oneida from New York State and sought new homes in Wisconsin in the early 1820s because of white encroachment on their lands. These tribes still live in Wisconsin but the Brothertown have no reservation since the government terminated their federal ties in 1848. They are in the process of applying for recognition.

**Do you know which Wisconsin tribe was granted homesteads instead of a reservation?**

The Winnebago. Although the southern bands of the tribe were moved to several locations before settling at their present reservation in Nebraska, the northern bands resisted attempts to remove them. In 1874 and 1881 they took advantage of a U.S. policy experiment, Indian homesteads, known as individual Indian trust lands.

**Do you know which reservation is closest to the Milwaukee Public Museum?**

Part of the Forest County Potawatomi Reservation. This includes the Potawatomi Bingo Hall and the Community Indian School, Inc., which stands on tribal trust land in Milwaukee.

**Do you know what tribes once lived in Wisconsin but were removed or moved elsewhere?**

The Santee Sioux. They ceded their land in western Wisconsin by treaty in 1837.

The Sauk and the Fox. Their territory, which extended into southwestern Wisconsin, was ceded in 1804.

The Kickapoo. They lived in southwestern Wisconsin but had already moved west by the early 1700s.

The Mascouten. They were absorbed by the Kickapoo.

The Ottawa. They began withdrawing from northern Wisconsin in the 1700s.

**Which American Indian Tribes Live in the State of Wisconsin?**

*The Menominee*



The Menominee have one reservation which is located in the central eastern area of Wisconsin. The villages of Keshena, Neopit, and Zoar are encompassed in this area.

### *The Ojibwe*

There are six Ojibwe reservations including tribal lands on Madeline Island which can be located on the map above. Madeline Island was the first major settlement in the great migration of the Ojibwe people.

### *The Oneida*

The Wisconsin Oneida Indian reservation is in Brown and Outagamie counties located in the Green Bay area of the state. The Oneida tribe, based initially in New York, is part of the League of the Iroquois.

### *The Potawatomi*

The Forest County Potawatomi have reservation land in close proximity to Crandon and Wabeno, Wisconsin. Also, the Potawatomi have tribal land here in the city.

### *Stockbridge-Munsee*

The Stockbridge Munsee band of Mohican Indians has a reservation which is located in Shawano County. Lands which were previously part of the Menominee reservation were ceded by that tribe to form the Stockbridge-Munsee reservation.

### *The Winnebago*

Land held by the Wisconsin Winnebago tribe can be found in nine counties within the state. There are also some major settlements and branch offices in six additional counties. The Wisconsin Winnebago are those people who refused to leave Wisconsin land for a reservation in Nebraska.

## Failed Experiments

[Watch Failed Experiments video](#)

### **Struggle for Survival**

#### *Responses to Religious Repression*

“Our religion seems foolish to you, but so does yours to me. The Baptists and Methodists and Presbyterians and the Catholics all have a different God. Why cannot we have one of our own?” - Sitting Bull, Hunkpapa Sioux, 1889

Attempts to Christianize the Indians resulted in policy that became increasingly repressive. Indian

religious observances were forbidden, yet they survived because they were practiced in secret. New intertribal religious movements stressing Indian unity and values developed during the latter part of the 1800s.

### *Boarding School*

“Many times we have been laughed at for our native way of dressing, but could anything we ever wore compare in utter foolishness to the steel-ribbed corset and the huge bustle which our girls adopted after a few years in school?” - Chief Luther Standing Bear, Oglala Sioux, 1868-1934

“Kill the Indian in him but save the man,” said General R.H. Pratt, who with the government help, founded an Indian boarding school in 1879 at Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Operated along military lines and stressing vocational training, this became the model for many government and religious schools designed to alienate Indian youth from their cultures and break their tribal ties. Severe penalties were imposed on children caught speaking their tribal languages rather than English.

Ironically, friendships made at intertribal schools became the source of leadership of national intertribal Indian organizations. Indian youth from different tribes discovered that they shared common cultural beliefs, grievances and aspirations. In addressing common needs and problems, former boarding school students made significant strides in the reawakening of cultural tradition and in improving economic conditions for American Indians.

### **The Last Land Grab**

#### *The Allotment Policy*

“We did not believe that any earthly power had the right to interfere with us as members of the Chippewa tribe, and at the White Earth Reservation, while peacefully pursuing the occupation we had chosen. We did not believe there existed a law which should prescribe for us the occupation we should follow. We knew of no law which could compel us to become agriculturists, professionals, ‘hewers of wood and drawers of water,’ or per contra, could restrain us from engaging in these occupations.” - Theodore Hudson Beaulier, Ojibwe, 1887

“A bill to despoil the Indians of their lands ... If I stand alone in the Senate, I want to put upon the record my prophesy ... That when these Indians shall have parted with their title, they will curse the hand that was raised professedly in their defense to secure this kind of legislation.” - Senator Henry M. Teller speaking to the Senate in opposition to allotment, 1881

The General Indian Allotment Act of 1887, based on earlier experiments, called for carving up the reservations into individual family farms to force acculturation. Between 1887 and 1934, the Indian landbase was reduced by three-fourths, from nearly 140 million acres to less than 50 million acres. Land left over after allotment was opened to public sale with the proceeds to pay for livestock and equipment to start the Indians out as farmers.

While allotment was promoted by humanitarians, it was supported by politicians whose constituents saw the chance to grab Indian land after allotments were made. They manipulated

the law to cheat Indians out of their allotments even before a 25-year period of protection had ended.

### *The Complications Of Heirship*

“Being an Indian is being related to the people. It is the beautiful freedom to go back to the reservation – to the peace that is really mine.” - Lee Cook, Ojibwe, in *The People Named the Chippewa*, 1984

Just as the tribes' land base was being severely reduced by allotment, the census of 1910 revealed that, after rapid decline in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Indian population had begun a steady increase. As Indian land was lost and remaining Indian lands were divided into even smaller parcels, through inheritance by increasing numbers of heirs, reservations became patchworks of Indian and non-Indian land. An individual's small inheritance from a number of relatives might be scattered uselessly all over the reservation. Conversely an original allotment, in some cases, might be shared by hundreds of heirs. This policy, in effect, prevented Indians from using their land and led to the Indian Bureau leasing large parcels to white farmers and ranchers and dividing the money among the locatable Indian heirs.

The people survived by various combinations of itinerant farm labor, gardening, heirship lease money, hunting and fishing, seasonal work in off-reservation towns and cities, charity of various kinds, selling craft items, and above all, by sharing as they always had.

### **The War Years**

#### *Indians as Allies Honoring Their Treaties*

“Native Americans were important in the wars of this country as far back as the Revolutionary War.” - Myrtle Thompson, Winnebago, 1993

As soon as the United States entered World War I in 1917, a high proportion of Indians enlisted. They were inspired in part by the warrior tradition, but also because tribes considered treaty relationships as alliances with the United States. Indian soldiers achieved a remarkable record of bravery in action.

News stories featured Indian war heroes but also pointed out reservation poverty. Responding to public concern, the government commissioned a major study of Indian affairs throughout the country. Although the Merriam Report published in 1928 assumed assimilation would occur eventually, it was highly critical of trying to force assimilation. The report recommended radical reforms. It revealed the disasters of allotment, noting that conditions would be even worse if Indian people had not retained old values of sharing and mutual aid. It recommended tribal enterprises, singling out the Menominee lumbering operation as a case of Indians prospering from their own labors because their reservation had not been allotted.

#### *The Indian Reorganization Era: A Victim of War*

“Now, therefore, we resolve that the Navajo Indians stand ready as they did in 1918 to aid and defend our government...and pledge our loyalty to the system which recognizes minority rights and a way of life that has placed us among the greatest people of our race.” - Resolution by Navajo Council, June 1940

The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 was a bold new approach. It was tribally oriented but was soon aborted and repudiated. Tribal self-government was encouraged and tribes had the option of voting as to whether they wanted written constitutions. A majority did, but some preferred their traditional councils. A few tribes, such as the Menominee, already had written forms of government.

John Collier, Sr., who was appointed Commissioner of Indian Affairs under President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933, was criticized for trying to turn back the clock and romanticising Indian traditions and tribalism. He also was criticized as a bureaucrat trying to impose White governmental and economic structures that conflicted with local traditions. Specific cases can be made for both criticisms, but generally a new optimism settled over Indian Country in 1934.

When the U.S. entered World War II in 1941, funding for domestic programs, including the Indian Bureau, was severely cut. But the tribes did not feel the economic effects because many Indian people left the reservation and enlisted or worked in defense factories. Collier resigned in 1945 because Congress increasingly disapproved of his non-assimilation philosophy.

When Indian people came home expecting to resume plans they had put on hold during the war, the BIA began denying support for long-range community development projects. By 1950, a new version of the old policy to forcibly assimilate Indians was underway.

## **Towards Self-Determination**

### *Termination and Relocation*

“The Indians survived our open intentions of wiping them out, and since the tide turned, they have weathered our good intentions toward them, which can be much more deadly.” - John Steinbeck

The Congressional policy of the 1950s was to abolish the constitutional ties of the federal government with Indian nations by termination of reservations and relocation of Indian people to cities. A small group in Congress touted the program in the language of the Black civil rights movement of the time. Applied to Indians, the rhetoric threatened loss of land, resources, and sovereignty. Words such as “integration” appealed widely to a Congress and a public who were generally sympathetic to Indians but woefully uninformed about them.

The termination policy was set forth in House Concurrent Resolution 108 in 1953. Indian resistance, and the high cost of carrying out termination, and the disastrous effects that were soon apparent held down the number of terminations. The policy was officially abandoned in 1972, but Congress was reluctant to restore federal ties with tribes whose reservations had been terminated.

Wisconsin was again a proving ground of policy experiments. In 1954, the first termination act was passed in regard to the Menominee despite their opposition. It took effect in 1961 and led to many hardships and some land loss. A grassroots Indian organization called DRUMS, Determination of Rights and Unity of Menominee Stockholders, held numerous demonstrations to publicize their problems and organized the stockholders to force the corporation to support lobbying to repeal the tribe's termination. The Menominee Restoration Act became law December 23, 1973. It paved the way for other tribes seeking restoration. The relocation of Indian people left many of them stranded and impoverished far from their homes. Intertribal urban centers emerged as a means of self-help and maintaining Indian identity.

### *On Indian Terms*

"I wanted to get involved. People said I was too young, too naïve – you can't fight the system. I dropped out of law school. That was the price I had to pay to get involved. It was worth it." - Ada Deer, Menominee, 1975

Indian militancy began in the 1960s in protest against the policies of the 1950s. The demand was for tribal self-determination to replace the assimilation of the 1950s. Indian people and informed non-Indians called for policy recognizing that, although individuals may join mainstream society, Indians as a people are not about to vanish. They also wanted policies acknowledging that tribes want to keep their special relationship with the federal government, and that they want to make their own decisions about their best interests. This set of guidelines was summed up in the course of the 1960s as Indian self determination.

### **Self-Determination**

No two Native American nations have had the same experiences in their relationship with the United States or Canadian governments. Learn more about the Dogrib nation and how they fought for their right to self govern as well as [MPM's Dogrib collection](#) here.

## Traditional Wisconsin Woodlands Powwow

Watch [Powwow](#) video

[Hear powwow roll call](#)

[Hear powwow singing](#)

### **Regalia**

The ornate clothing worn by Native Americans at powwows is known as regalia, or powwow outfits. Fashions have varied through time, by location, and the types of dance styles favored by different nations. Click the link below to learn more about MPM's James Howard Collection, which includes more than 1,500 pieces of regalia dating between 1930-1982.

[James Howard Collection](#)

The Milwaukee Public Museum thanks the many American Indians in Wisconsin who helped make this exhibit possible and who shared their explanation of the powwow with us.

### **A Celebration for All Ages**

At a powwow, you will find people of all ages celebrating together. No one is excluded from the powwow circle, as no one is excluded from the circle of life. The elders, as well as newborn infants, can be found sharing and learning together, and as soon as a youngster can walk, he or she is welcome to join the dance.

### **There's More to Powwows than Dancing**

Powwows are many things to each individual and something different to everyone. Not everyone at a powwow dances, and cultural traditions are celebrated in many different ways. Many powwows include feasts and have food stands where traditional food like fry bread or venison can be purchased. Traditional arts and crafts are often on display and many special events like giveaways take place. In a giveaway, an individual of a family will present gifts in honor of an act of kindness, a special event, or acknowledgment of a special position.

### **Powwow Outfits**

As it is with the great diversity in people, so it is with powwow outfits. Look closely and you will find no two outfits exactly the same. There are certain styles of outfits that correspond with certain styles of dancing, but each dancer's outfit is unique, sometimes reflecting the dancer's personality, geographic area, tribe, clan, and/or warrior (veteran) status.

### **A Lesson From the Corn**

Take a good look at the people in this exhibit. Each person differs yet each is an American Indian. All have something in common, but no two are the same.

So it is with corn. When you think of corn, you probably visualize yellow kernels on a cob -- the sweet corn you eat at the State Fair or at dinner. But take a closer look. Corn is a delight to your eyes. It is purest white, pastel colored, earth-toned, red, blue, or a deep, glossy black. It can be on large ears more than a foot long, or tiny ears less than three inches. It can be field corn used to feed farm animals. It can be the blue corn used in some tortilla chips. It can be the popcorn you eat at the movies. The way it grows, the uses, the tastes all vary, yet all are corn.

### **A Powwow**

The powwow circle is a model for peace. Powwows provide an opportunity for American Indians to celebrate life of the people, through dance, song, and other traditional activities. At a powwow, all people, Indian and non-Indian alike, come together to celebrate life. Powwows provide a time

for regrouping of the soul and reaffirmation of identity.

Powwows are gatherings. They are spiritual and religious, but religious in the manner of Indian culture, not in the way associated with churches or synagogues. A powwow is a peacemaker, a place for people to relate to other people, a time to communicate with the Creator. In the powwow circle, all are equal, and negative thoughts and feelings are to be put aside.

Powwows are extensions of the significance of music and dance in American Indian culture and tradition. The music, song, and dance of the powwow have practical, ceremonial, historical, and social significance. In Indian tradition, powwows are treasured as a gift from the Creator.

### **The Grand Entry**

The scene you see here represents the grand entry of a powwow. The dancers enter in a certain order. First come the flagbearers, who are so honored for being veterans. The flagbearers are led by a veteran who carries an eagle-feather staff, which is the equivalent to an American flag. All powwow participants are asked to stand, and men are asked to remove their hats during the grand entry until the flags are installed in a place of honor within the powwow arena and the invocation is given. At sundown, the flags are retired by the same honor guard.

The eagle is considered a sacred bird in American Indian cultures. Eagle feathers are awarded for acts of courage or great accomplishment and can often be seen on powwow outfits. When an eagle feather is dropped during a powwow, all dancing stops and the powwow arena is cleared. Only a qualified veteran can retrieve the eagle feather during a special ceremony.

Normally the feather staff carried by the flagbearer during the grand entry is dressed with eagle feathers. In this grand entry scene, however, we chose not to use real eagle feathers in deference to their sacred nature.

### **The Eagle Feather Staff**

The seven-feather simulated eagle feather staff you see here has been created to dramatically symbolize that we are in the era of the Seventh Fire as described in Anishinaabe oral tradition. The color blue symbolizes the Spirit world where all must one day go. The color red indicates all life in this world. And the yellow wavy mid-line symbolizes the life line that we all travel before passing on to the Spirit world.

### **Veterans are Important**

Warriors have always been significant in Indian traditions as defenders of the people. The bravest warriors honored the people, and powwows honor the warriors. There is always a veteran honor dance to begin a powwow after the grand entry, the flag song, and the invocation. It is especially important that veterans are honored at powwows today because there are many American Indian men and women who have proudly served in the United States Armed Forces or in service to their people.

## **Indian Princesses**

Young women are often chosen by community powwows or other organizations to bear the title of Princess. They wear cloth banners bearing the name of their tribe, such as Miss Indian Summer or Miss A.I.A.C., and beaded crowns. The title honors the young women and recognizes them for their ability or service. It is their responsibility to attend powwows throughout the year representing their sponsoring organizations or powwows.

## **Men's Traditional Dancers**

This dance is designated generally by outfit and age. The dancer wears more specifically "traditional" materials. A bustle of eagle feathers is worn in a specific manner. The dancer depicts himself on the hunt. At first he stalks the game. Then he sights it and slays it. Finally, he celebrates his successful hunt. A veteran warrior recreates a successful battle.

## **Men's Fancy Dancers**

This is a high energy, rigorous dance style and can be noted by the two vibrant bustles worn by the dancer; one at the shoulders, the other at the small of the back. There is a great deal of movement involved with this dance and footwork becomes intricate. The men's fancy dance is a category occupied primarily by boys and young men.

## **Grass Dancers**

This is a dance performed by men and is fairly easy to spot because of the nature of the outfit worn by the dancer. Long strands of brightly colored yarn hang from both the shirt and leggings. The grass dancer's side to side shoulder-swaying movement evokes a sense of wind-blown prairie grasses.

## **Women's Traditional Dancers**

As with the men's traditional style, women in this category wear materials more closely allied with ancient tradition such as buckskin, elk teeth, and trade cloth, as well as many other varieties of materials. A feather in the hair, a purse, and/or a fan may also be part of this outfit. A women's traditional dancer moves in a stately and rhythmic fashion.

## **Jingle Dress Dancer**

As the name would suggest, the outfit worn for this dance is decorated with a number of cone-shaped in "jingles." When danced these jingles make quite a pleasing sound. Due to the fitted shape of this dress, leg movement tend to be more restricted, although less reserved than the traditional style. The jingle dress was originally created for a women's healing dance ceremony.

## **Fancy Shawl Dancers**

Beautifully decorated shawls add to the illusion that the women's fancy dancer could take flight. A shawl dancer is free to turn circles and as she does her shawl flutters out behind her, adding to the



visual impact of this dance. As such, there is a great deal more intricacy of movement and footwork than in the traditional or jingle dress categories. Like the men's fancy dance, younger women or girls learn this style.

### **Children**

Children dance in every category, dressed in smaller versions of the outfits of their elders. You will see boy traditional, fancy, and grass dancers, and girl traditional, jingle, and fancy shawl dancers. As soon as a youngster can walk, he or she is welcome to join the powwow circle.

### **Master of Ceremonies**

Integral to any powwow is the role of the emcee. He begins and ends the proceedings, calls the songs, makes announcements, interjects humor and anecdotes, and keeps everything going. The powwow committee works with the emcee to make decisions about what should happen - which often has nothing to do with a printed schedule of events. The concept of the right time for doing things is important in many Indian cultures, and that is often in evidence at powwows. Powwows begin and end when the time is right.

### **The Traditional Powwow Drum**

Referred to by many American Indians as "the real heartbeat of America," the traditional handmade powwow drum traces its roots back to nonsecular use by members of both the old-time Grass Dance Society and the Big Drum Dance Society. The message of peace and brotherhood that lies at the heart of the Big Drum Society prevails throughout "Indian Country" at every traditional powwow, where ALL PEOPLE OF ALL RACES ARE WELCOME to join in and share in peace and joy, that celebration of life.

The very construction and "dressing up" of the handmade traditional "fun" or powwow drum involves certain steps, or procedures, that are meant to give life (a spirit) to that particular drum so that when it sounds its voice, it will be beautiful and will be heard. (This is done in much the same way as the nonsecular ceremonial drums are "born" and cared for.)

Those individuals who "sit" at a drum have a responsibility to it: to care for it with reverence, and to sing in such a way as to call in those ancestors who have passed into the Spirit world, so that they too may dance where they have already left their footprints...

So it is, in the thoughts of the traditional people.

### **Indian Country**

Do you know where Indian Country is? If you answered Oklahoma or someplace in the West, you are mistaken. Indian Country is any place where American Indians are. It can be on a reservation, it can be in a large urban city, and it certainly is at any powwow. The contemporary Woodland Indian powwow you see here is a good example of Indian Country. Here you see six of the tribes in Wisconsin represented - Menominee, Ojibwe, Oneida, Potawatomi, Stockbridge-Munsee, and

Winnebago.

The Milwaukee Public Museum thanks the many American Indian in Wisconsin who helped make this exhibit possible and who shared their explanation of the powwow with us.

### **Cultural Traditions**

"The Indians must always be remembered in this land. Out of our landscapes we have given names to many beautiful things which will always speak to us." - Khe-tha-a-hi (Eagle Wing)

Indians responded to the arrival of Europeans on the basis of long experience in intertribal trade, diplomacy, and warfare. Europeans brought new goods and ideas that Indian people adapted to suit their own tastes and interests. Although this phase of coexistence with Europeans included hostilities as well as periods of peace, the tribes managed their own affairs internally and with the Europeans.

Objects typical of the pre-contact period continued in use, but some were replaced and many were embellished with European trade goods. The newcomers also readily adopted items and ideas from the Indians - edibles of all kinds, tobacco, herbal medicines, canoes, snowshoes, the game of la crosse, and place names from various Indian languages that dot the map of North America. It is estimated that the English language has been enriched by more than a thousand words from the native languages. Some examples are caucus, moose, hurricane, and totem.

While the intrusion of Europeans repeatedly threatened the continuity and survival of indigenous cultures, and the very lives of indigenous people, those cultures have resisted assimilation and annihilation. This exhibit stands as a tribute to the American Indian -- a people of culture.

### **Indian Country**

"I love Indian Country... If someone says, well what do you mean Indian Country? If someone says where is Indian Country? I say, hey, the western hemisphere is Indian Country." - Paul De Main, Oneida, 1993

### **The Indians Of North America**

"But it is the unquenchable spirit that has saved him - his clinging to Indian ways, Indian thought, and tradition, that has kept him and is keeping him today." - Chief Luther Standing Bear, Oglala Sioux, 1868-1939

The dramatic, new environment you have just visited stands as "a tribute to survival" of American Indian people. When you leave this gallery, you can "visit" different geographic regions of North America to see how the American Indians lived in North America after European contact, but while they were still completely in charge of their own affairs. The present-day descendants of those Indian people continue to selectively adapt to their environment as they live in the modern world on reservations and in urban settings while maintaining their identity as Indians. The exhibits you are about to see are among the Museum's oldest, to be renovated for future

generations.

### **Indian Country Powwow Sponsors**

Forest County Potawatomi Community of Wisconsin  
Hartford Shegonee, Tribal Chairman  
Indian Community School of Milwaukee, Inc.  
Loretta Ford, Board Chairman  
Omni Bingo of Wisconsin, Inc.  
John J. Burke, Jr., Chairman

### **Powwow Turntable Renovation**

This Powwow Grand Entry was erected in 1993 and features individuals from most Wisconsin tribes and the outfits they created and wore at that time. As such, this scene reflects a specific moment in an ever-developing cultural celebration. The turntable, as well as the mechanism operating it, were completely redesigned and rebuilt in 2009, using 21st-century technology, with generous support from:

Halbert & Alice Kadish Foundation  
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