**Stories from the Medicine Wheel**

**Wisconsin Indian Powwow Grand Entry**

*Location: Second floor near escalator lobby within A Tribute to Survival. (#1 on visitor map)*

The man in the yellow outfit and one of the children in the Grand Entry Scene are grass dancers. They are both holding a hoop divided into four sections. The hoop is carried in honor of the creator and shows their connection to the earth.

**EXHIBIT CONNECTIONS:**
The clothing of the puppets used in the play and the outfits worn by the people in this powwow scene are both a visual representation of their tribe as well as their native identity, showing their connection to the past, present, and future. Each item worn or carried, like the hoop, has a separate history or story; there is a specific reason for selecting every piece. Discuss with your team what our clothing says about us and our culture as a whole. (Hint: How is what you wear for special occasions different from what you wear every day to school? The outfits in the Grand Entry Scene are similar; they are a change of clothing from their everyday wardrobe.)

**CURATOR COMMENTS:**
The outfits worn during powwows often represent an individual’s place in their community. Within the exhibit you see no outfit is like another; the colors and composing elements convey the wearer’s status, personal preferences and tribal affiliation. For example, the Eagle Flag Staff seen in the powwow conveys meaning through color; blue symbolizes the spirit world, red symbolizes life on earth, and yellow symbolizes the middle earth that is between life and the spirit world. In most cultures, uniforms communicate an occupation and do not necessarily serve a deep symbolic purpose like some of these powwow outfits. For instance, a police officer wears a police uniform with a badge and holster to communicate his/her occupation. Other examples include the attire of a chef’s, a flight attendant, a fireman, or a ballet dancer.

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**WHAT DOES THE CIRCLE SYMBOLIZE?**

The number 4 (as seen in the four sections above) is a sacred number in most North American Indian tribes and you can see a variety of meanings in the circle. Not only does it associate with the different seasons, but also with the four directions and primary colors among other things.
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**Man’una: The Earth Bringer (Ho-Chunk)**

Location: Located in the Plank House next to the grizzly bear diorama on the second floor in the Northwest Coast. (#4 on visitor map)

Earthmaker first created the chiefs of the Thunderbirds. This dance outfit is one example of how a Thunderbird is portrayed by the Kwakwaka’wakw (kwak-walk-Kee-walk) First Nation in Canada.

**CURATOR COMMENTS:**

Regarding the Thunderbird, many cultures in the Americas have a thunderbird character. Why do you think this is?

**North American Indian Tipi**

Location: Found on the second floor in the North American Indian Plains area next to the Crow Bison Hunt diorama. (#1 on visitor map)

Man’una gave the beings fire so they could live on the earth warmly and safely.

**CURATOR COMMENTS:**

Fire is essential for so many things including keeping warm, cooking food, making metal tools, and keeping animals away. The light the fire radiates is a welcoming sign for others to join the fire circle and also allowed people to work at night. In many North American Indian cultures, fire (sometimes with water, sky and/or earth elements) is frequently used in creation stories.

**Tobacco and Tools**

Location: Tobacco on the cutting board is found on the second floor in the North American Indian Plains area behind the tipi. (#1 on visitor map)

Man’una gave the beings tobacco to grow in order to make offerings.

**CURATOR COMMENTS:**

Tobacco is a sacred item among all North American Indian tribes. It is considered a gift from the creator and is often mentioned in creation stories.

**VOCABULARY WORD:**

Diorama: a three-dimensional representation of a scene in which objects or models are arranged in a natural setting against a realistic background.

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**EXHIBIT CONNECTIONS:**

1. Throughout the museum you can find different versions of stories explaining how the earth came to be. Discuss creation stories that you have heard or read from any culture or time with your team, then compare and contrast those with the Earth Bringer. How are they similar or different?

2. Think of each diorama (large or miniature) as telling a different story. What story would you tell about one of your favorite dioramas?
Stories from the Medicine Wheel

WHERE WE GOT NIGHT AND DAY (MENOMINEE)

EXHIBIT CONNECTIONS:

1. This Native American story of how we got night and day is based on a word contest.

   **Question:** How many times can one group quickly say “night” over and over and one group say “light” without making a mistake? What is the moral of this story? Discuss your thoughts with your team.

   **Answer:** The Menominee story featuring the saw-whet owl and rabbit, representing the elements of dark and light, show how generosity grows from understanding another’s point of view.

2. In the Museum, do you recognize animals that are awake during the day and others that are active at night? Can you name some of those animals? What are the benefits of daytime and the benefits of nighttime?

CURATOR COMMENTS:

Every culture in the world has used animals to tell stories. The presence of animals in these moral tales helps make the lessons memorable and inviting. We see personalities in the animals around us, like a sly fox or a hard-working ant, and we use these traits to talk about the ways we think we should (or should not) behave.
**EXHIBIT GUIDE**

**Stories from the Medicine Wheel**

**WHY THE CORN HUSK DOLL HAS NO FACE (ONEIDA)**

Location: Found on the second floor near escalator lobby within A Tribute to Survival. (#1 on visitor map)

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**The Three Sisters**

The Three Sisters are the sustainers of life—beans, squash, and corn.  
Location: Found on the second floor within A Tribute to Survival - A Fateful Encounter exhibit area.

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**Corn Dolls**

There are 3 examples of Iroquois corn husk dolls in the exhibit—note the facelessness of the husk dolls.  
Location: Found on the second floor near the North America section of the Iroquois Woman’s World display next to the Broadleaf Forest exhibit. (#3 on visitor map)

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**Hopi Woman**

This Hopi woman is grinding corn to make bread. Corn is important not just for tribes in this area but also in the Southwest United States, especially among the Pueblo groups like the Hopi.  
Location: Found on the second floor, within the adobe home in the Southwest region. (#7 on visitor map)

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**EXHIBIT CONNECTIONS:**

Now that we have heard this Oneida story, what do you think are three good qualities to demonstrate to others and what are three bad qualities that might not be good for people to have? (While this is an open-ended question, many students may suggest conceit or vanity, as discussed in the story.)

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**CURATOR COMMENTS:**

Another famous parallel story relates to the story of Narcissus in Greek mythology. He was a hunter who was known for his beauty. He was very proud and scorned those who loved him. Nemesis, the spirit of divine retribution against those who compared themselves to the gods, noticed this behavior and led Narcissus to a pool, where he saw his own reflection in the water and fell in love with it, not realizing it was merely an image. Unable to leave the beauty of his reflection, Narcissus drowned (or in some versions died of hunger). Narcissus is the origin of the term narcissism, a fixation with oneself and one’s physical appearance.

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What season & direction does this story represent?

Spring  Summer  Fall  Winter  
(circle one)

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SHINGABISS (OJIBWE)

EXHIBIT CONNECTIONS:

1. This story tells a tale of survival and perseverance. Discuss with your team how these seasonal exhibits show the ingenuity of Native people in Wisconsin who used their environment to survive and thrive. Do you think this is how Native American people live and work today? What types of things do you think they still do or are involved in today?

   Answer: All of them. Many Native people also do the same types of things that you and your parents do for work and for fun.

2. Can you recognize some of the things in the winter exhibit? (Snowshoes, snow snake game, lacrosse, ice fishing, etc.)

CURATOR COMMENTS:

The winter months were often a time for telling stories around the fire. Sometimes favorite stories were requested and sometimes winter was the time when new stories came into being. In every culture around the world, a good storyteller, one who could weave pictures with their words and capture the imagination of their listeners, was honored by their families and their communities. Not only were the stories entertaining (where a good storyteller could make one feel happy, scared, or sad within minutes), these people also had the important responsibility as keepers of their history. It is because of their efforts, and those that came after them, that you were honored by the gift of their stories today.