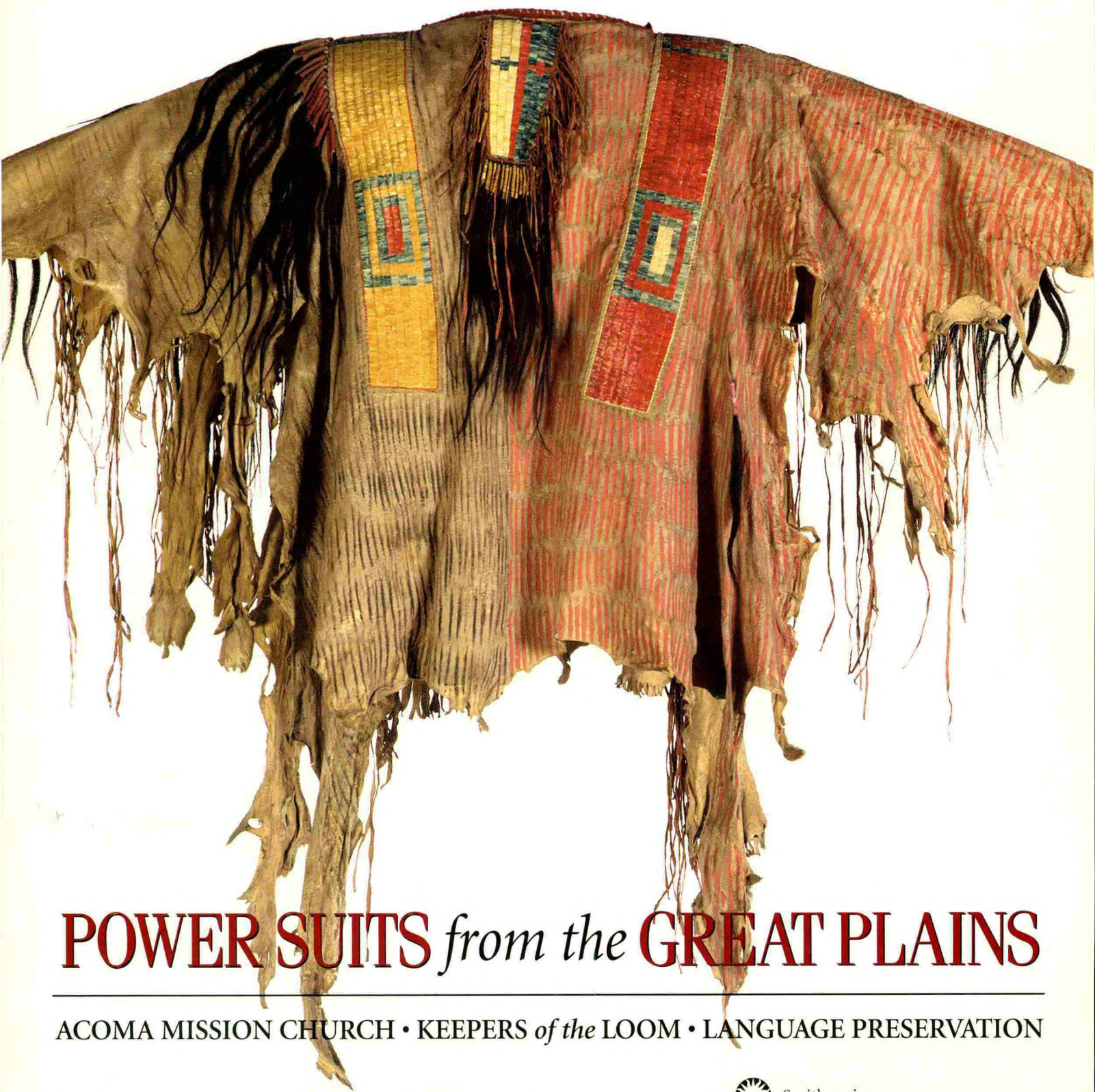


NATIONAL MUSEUM *of the*
American Indian

Winter 2001

Celebrating Native Traditions & Communities



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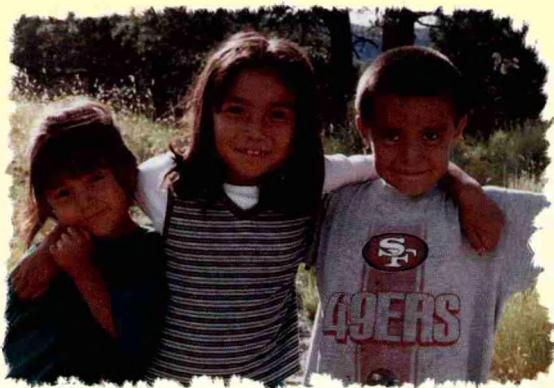
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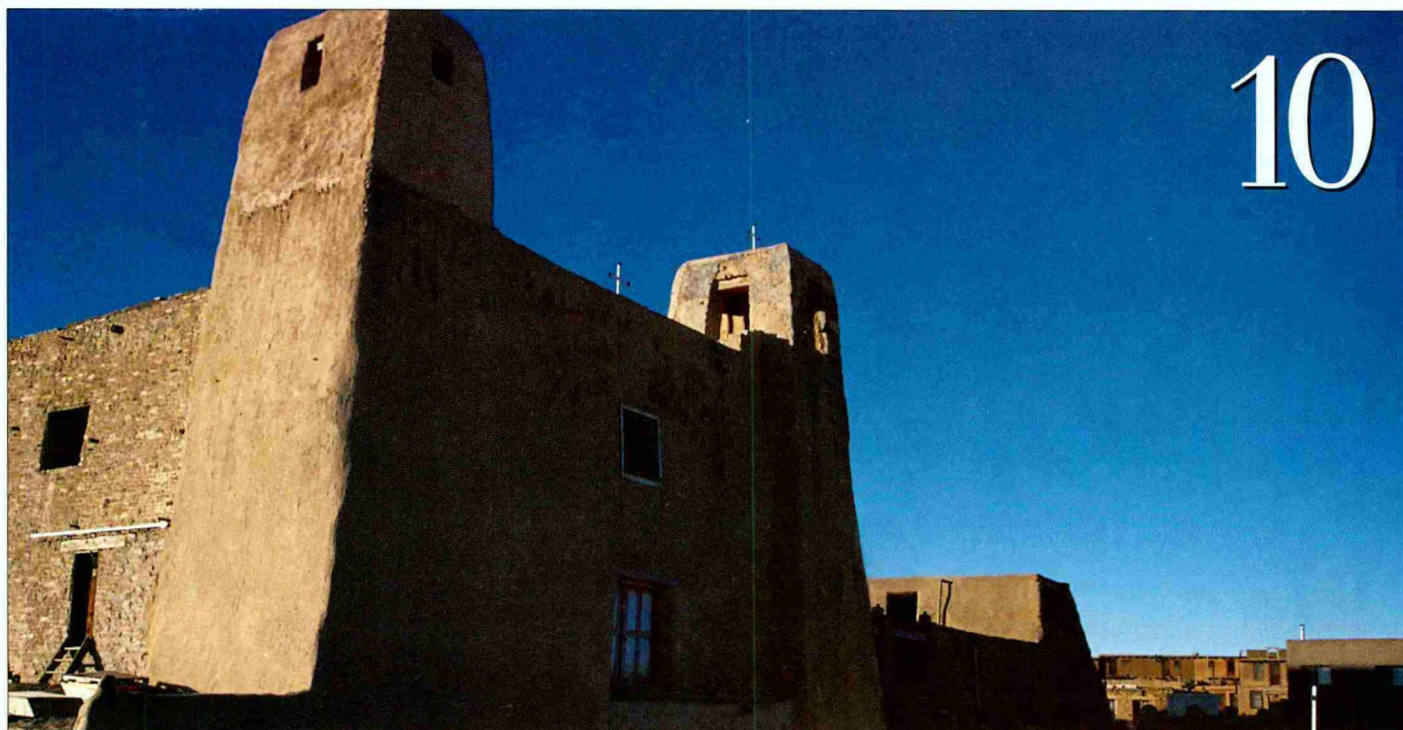
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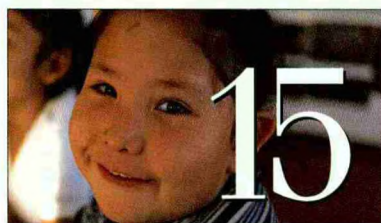


Smithsonian Study Tours



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10 371-year-old San Esteban del Rey Mission Church – In 1999, then-First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, honorary chair for the Millennium Committee, declared the San Esteban del Rey Mission an American treasure. Over hundreds of years, generations of Acoma people have cared for and cherished the Acoma mission in New Mexico. Ben Winton (Pascua Yaqui) discusses the history and the preservation efforts of the church with Everett Garcia, Acoma caretaker, and Brian Vallo, director of the Acoma Historic Preservation Office. Photos by Lee Marmon (Laguna Pueblo).

15 Keeping Native Languages Alive – Educators and activists stress the notion that current attitudes about the preservation of Native languages have to change to help strengthen the movement to keep Native languages alive today. Rita Pyrellis (Cheyenne River Sioux) talks with Darrell Kipp (Blackfeet), James Jackson, Jr. (Hoopa), Jessie Little Doe (Mashpee Wampanoag), Paul Rickard (Cree), and others who are concerned with language revitalization efforts. Ken Blackbird (Assiniboine) travels to the Nizi Puh Wah Sin School on the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana to photograph young students hard at work learning their language.

19 Keepers of the Loom in Mexico – In the Guatemala lowlands, Juana Chiquin (Pocomchi) and other women keep the traditions of the backstrap loom alive in the small village of Tampur. Outside of the Mexican tourist industry, the women weave in the spirit of keeping their cultural and spiritual traditions alive. Nancy Ackerman (Mohawk) writes about and photographs Chiquin at home in her village.

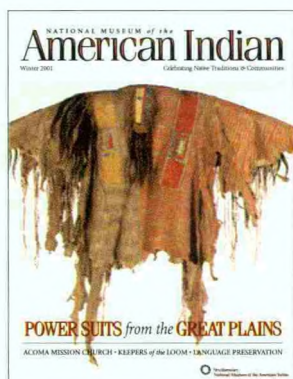


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Living Native Voices

by Terence Winch

One of the rewards of my job is the opportunity to collaborate with some of the talented Native writers and artists at work today, many of them prominent and illustrious. Sometimes, however, they are not so well known. Back in 1995, a young Navajo woman named Linda Martin worked for a few months as an intern in the Publications Office in Washington, D.C. Although multitasked, she concentrated primarily on graphic design. We noticed over the course of time, however, that she was an excellent writer and a gifted illustrator. When we started putting together the concept for our first children's book (a thunderbird story by Joe Medicine Crow), someone had the idea to ask Martin to take a crack at illustrating the story. At first she begged off, claiming to lack experience at such a task. But we arm-twisted and persisted, and finally she gave it a go. In short order, she produced the 11 stunning illustrations for *Brave Wolf and the Thunderbird*. Abbeville Press, one of New York's leading art book publishers, loved Martin's work and quickly entered into a partnership with the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) to produce a series of children's books. Martin went on to work for *Atlantl*, *Indian Country Today*, and *Native Peoples* magazine. I'm very pleased to report that in 2001, Martin returns to the Museum as an editor in the Publications Office.

The first book produced by the new NMAI, *Native American Dance: Ceremonies and Social Traditions*, came out in 1992 and has, ever since, been regarded as a major contribution to the field. Until our book, there was no comparable, authoritative study of Indian dance in print. With that first book, the Museum established many of the principles and approaches that have guided our publications program ever since. We have always tried to work with our Native colleagues in a way that demonstrates our respect and appreciation for Indian peoples. With the dance book, for example, we did some detective work to find out the identity of the young fancy dancer, John Keel (Comanche), featured on the cover, and he was happy to give us permission to use his likeness.

The central tenet we have held to is that,

whenever possible, a Native voice should always be the driving force behind our publications. For the dance book, the brainchild of former colleague Fred Nahwooksy (Comanche), we enlisted the guidance of UCLA professor Charlotte Heth (Cherokee) as general editor. Not long after, Dr. Heth, an ethnomusicologist, was also recruited to be executive producer of our first music album, *Creation's Journey: Native American Music Presented by the National Museum of the American Indian*, which came out on the Smithsonian/Folkways label in 1994.



The central tenet we have held to is that, whenever possible, a Native voice should always be the driving force behind our publications.

Having collaborated so much with us, Heth finally joined the Museum staff as assistant director for public programs. When she retired in 1999, we lost not only a friend and leader, but a great intellectual resource as well.

In similar fashion, Tim Johnson (Mohawk) agreed to be general editor for *Spirit Capture: Photographs from the National Museum of the American Indian*, the Museum's acclaimed photo book. And, like Heth, he later joined the staff. As assistant director for community

services, he helped to get this magazine, *American Indian*, off the ground. Now editor and publisher of the influential weekly *Indian Country Today*, Johnson remains closely involved with NMAI as the general editor of *The Native Universe*, one of two major books we are co-publishing with the National Geographic Society to help mark the Mall Museum opening.

Although there have certainly been variations on the theme, the centrality of the Native voice has continued to define our approach to our publishing efforts. Our children's books in the *Tales of the People* series with Abbeville Press, for example, are always by a Native writer and illustrator—making the series unique in a marketplace crowded with bogus "Indian" books for kids. The Publications Office also recently collaborated with the Community Services Department to produce an award-winning, community-based anthology of poems by young Native American writers called *When the Rain Sings* (Simon & Schuster). We received additional help from the Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers, a leading Indian organization, and an educational group called ArtsReach.

We have produced many other books, print products (calendars, notecards, etc.), and two music albums. In 1993 we put up the Museum's website, which last year became the responsibility of NMAI's new Office of Information Resources Management. Finally, the Publications Office produces all the brochures and rack cards on the Museum and the many exhibitions we present.

Our recordings, books, and other publications help to bring the Museum and its work to a large audience. With that work, we are helping readers everywhere to recognize the value and continuity of Native cultures and peoples, through the voices of Indian peoples themselves. ■

Terence Winch is head of Publications for the National Museum of the American Indian.

Illustration by Linda R. Martin (Navajo) is from Brave Wolf and Thunderbird (1998), a traditional story by Joe Medicine Crow (Crow) and part of NMAI's Tales of the People children's book series with Abbeville Press. Books in the series can be ordered using the special insert in this issue.



Cultural Resources Center Wins Award

The National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI)'s Cultural Resources Center (CRC) recently was selected as the winner of the Public/Government New Construction award for the year 2000. Awarded annually by *Buildings* magazine, the honor recognizes excellence in design and construction across the United States. The CRC presently houses more than 55,000 of the NMAI's collection of more than 800,000 objects.

The CRC building is commendable not only for its beauty but also for its unique, yet appropriate, blend of form and function. "We are very proud of the building's form, function, and references to traditional Native design concepts," said Duane Blue Spruce (Laguna Pueblo), facilities planner and NMAI representative during the CRC design and construction process.

The CRC was designed by Polshek Tobey + Davis in association with the Native American Design Collaborative. The result is a complex that incorporates Native American design prin-

ciples into its design. At the heart of the building is the welcoming circle, a ceremonial space from which the four cardinal directions emanate to organize the building's plan and structure. The main entrance opens to the east; an outdoor ceremonial area marks the northern end of the building's north-south axis. "The design is a testament to the Museum's commitment to create a culturally responsive building," Blue Spruce said, "and to the people who use its resources."

The CRC can be visited by the public on a limited basis and is open to members of Native American communities. "The collection is at the heart of the Museum," Blue Spruce said, "and the building is an appropriate home that honors the objects and the cultures that created them."

— Jason Ryle

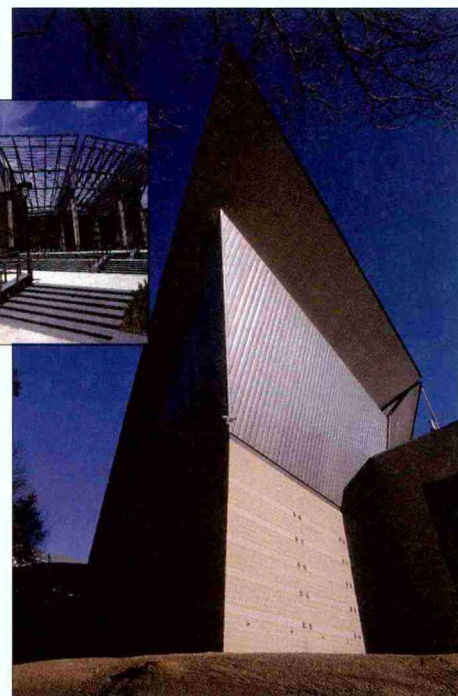


Photo by Rich Straus. Inset photo by Katherine Fogden

U.S. Mint Will Circulate NMAI Commemorative Coin This Year

History will be revived and celebrated with a new coin commemorating the future of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) and benefitting its Mall Museum construction fund. The NMAI's important place in the United States will be recognized with a commemorative silver dollar, a replica of the classic buffalo nickel.

Passed by the U.S. Senate last October, the National Museum of the American Indian Commemorative Coin Act of 2000 ensures that the new coin will benefit the Museum while resurrecting a currency that is both nostalgic and appealing to coin collectors and many others. The newly minted silver dollar coins will be modeled after James Earle Fraser's design for the original five-cent buffalo coin that was in circulation from 1913 to 1938. The NMAI commemorative coin features a profile of a Native American on one side and a buffalo on the reverse. According to legend, three American Indian performers from the Wild West shows posed for Fraser, who also used a buffalo from New York's Central Park Zoo as his model.

Sponsored by Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell

(Northern Cheyenne) and Rep. Frank Lucas, the coin reaffirms the museum's place in American culture. "[Their] support demonstrates Congress' continuing strong commitment to the National Museum of the American Indian," said W. Richard West, NMAI Director.

The U.S. Mint will limit production of the 500,000 proof-quality coins to the year 2001. Ten dollars from the sale of every coin goes directly to fund the opening of the new NMAI in Washington, D.C., in the autumn of 2003. Revenue from the sale of these special coins is expected to raise as much as \$5 million for the Museum.

The buffalo, a longtime symbol for Native Americans, is a fitting image for the NMAI commemorative coin. The coin embodies our collective history and marks a new chapter for the NMAI. "Once again the buffalo will provide for the American Indians," Campbell said. "This bill not only revives a popular coin but helps fund the newest national Museum. It is a way for our past to provide for our future."

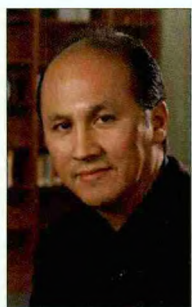
Information about how to purchase these coins from the U.S. Mint will be published in *American Indian* and will be available later this year at www.usmint.gov or by calling 1-800-USA-MINT.—

Jason Ryle



Photo courtesy of Mises Magazines, Inc.

NMAI Makes New Appointments



Gerald McMaster (Plains Cree) was recently hired as the deputy assistant director for cultural resources at the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) to oversee the curatorial, repatriation, and archival departments. He also

oversees the production of the permanent exhibitions. He co-edits the Museum's 2003 commemorative book *The Native Universe*, and contributes to the content development of the Museum's inaugural films.

McMaster recently left his position as curator-in-charge of the Canadian Museum of Civilization's First Peoples Hall in Hull, Quebec. Before that, he was the museum's curator of contemporary art where he produced many leading-edge exhibitions. In 1995, he was Canadian commissioner to the Venice Biennale, one of the world's most prestigious exhibitions. McMaster is originally from Saskatchewan and holds a Ph.D. from the University of Amsterdam, and degrees from the Institute of American Indian Arts, the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, and Carleton University. He is no stranger to NMAI, having worked as an adviser for the exhibition *All Roads Are Good* and was also a member of the Board of Trustees.

He says he is excited about the "groundbreak-

ing work" being done by the NMAI to ensure that Indian people, both inside and outside, are involved at all levels. — *Jennifer David*



As the Museum's new assistant director for public programs, **Helen Scheirbeck's** (Lumbee) duties will include developing innovative public programs for the Mall Museum scheduled to open in 2003. Scheirbeck's extensive career includes

appointments to numerous organizations serving Indian tribes and peoples. She chaired the Indian Education Task Force of the American Indian Policy Review Commission, and she was director of the American Indian programs for the Save the Children program. Recently, she served approximately 350 tribes in her position as director of Head Start's American Indian and Alaska Native program.

"I have always tried to create awareness of Native cultures, languages and artists in my work," says Scheirbeck. She plans to use a well-established network she's created with Native artists to develop educational programming, resource materials, and performing arts for the future Mall Museum.

Originally from Pembroke, N.C., Scheirbeck received a Ph.D. from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. She studied

international relations at Columbia University.

— *Andre Morriseau*

Niki Sandoval (Chumash) has been named the new assistant director for community services at the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). Conversant in Spanish, Sandoval works with indigenous communities in Latin America that are developing community museums. Sandoval utilizes the concept of the NMAI's "Fourth Museum," or museum without walls, in



which NMAI staff members travel to countries like Panama or Mexico to provide technical support to community museum projects. She believes this works for indigenous people who cannot travel to NMAI's physical facilities like the Cultural Resources Center (CRC) in Suitland, Md., the George Gustav Heye Center in Manhattan, or the future National Mall Museum.

One of Sandoval's major projects will be an electronic publication, published in both English and Spanish versions, that offers information on how to start a community museum. Print versions will be available to those communities that have no Internet access. Sandoval will also oversee training in radio production and editing in the Community Services Department at the CRC.

— *Andre Morriseau*

Exhibition of Eastman Watercolors Celebrates 19th Century Dakota Life

The year was 1830. A young army officer named Seth Eastman was posted at Fort Snelling, a frontier fort in what is now Minnesota. He was also an artist. And though his presence in a land inhabited by the Dakota people was not entirely welcome, Eastman's drawings and paintings of Dakota life have lived on. Now, in honor of the artist who chose to see the Dakota people as they really were, some of his drawings will hang in a tribal community center in a Dakota community.

Shakopee Mdewakanaton Dakota Community, near Minneapolis, selected three Eastman images to be used for stained-glass windows in their new spiritual center, Tiowakan (Dakota for "Spirit Within"). Many community

members, including descendents of Eastman and his Dakota wife, Wakaninajinwin, looked at different works of art from many different sources before choosing the Eastman pieces. They felt his pieces were accurate reflections of their community's way of life in the 19th century.

The images used in the stained glass are part of a larger exhibit, *Painting the Dakota*, that will open in April 2000 at the National Museum of the American Indian's George Gustav Heye Center (GGHC) in New York City. The exhibit consists of 56 watercolors that Eastman painted throughout the mid-19th century. Some have never been seen in public, and all of them document everyday Dakota life at a time of great upheaval and change. Though Eastman mistak-

enly believed that the Dakota, and all Native Americans, were on the brink of extinction, he is credited with documenting accurate and detailed portrayals of Dakota life, including hunting buffalo, fishing, playing games, and participating in ceremonies.

The paintings in this exhibit belong to W. Duncan MacMillan, president of Afton Historical Society Press, which published the book that accompanies the exhibit. MacMillan acquired them from the James J. Hill collection in St. Paul, Minn., when there were plans to divide the collection and sell the pieces to collectors. MacMillan said he wanted the public to have access to all the works. The exhibit runs at the GGHC until Oct. 7, 2001. — *Jennifer David*



Nicolson & Wallowing Bull Receive Fellowships

History plays an important part in work to be done by two of the winners of the 2001 Native American Artist Fellowships, sponsored by the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI).

Marianne Nicolson (Dzawa'da'enukw) is both a painter and photographer and has a master's degree from the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada. She has exhibited widely throughout Canada, and some of her work was shown at the NMAI as part of the *Reservation X* and the *who stole the teepee?* exhibits.

Star Wallowing Bull (Big Bear) is a young artist who has already been making a name for himself in his home in Minnesota. Son of another well-known artist, Frank Big Bear, Wallowing Bull (Ojibwe Arapaho) has learned from the best and is gathering accolades for his use of bright colors and his boldness in depicting difficult and controversial subjects.

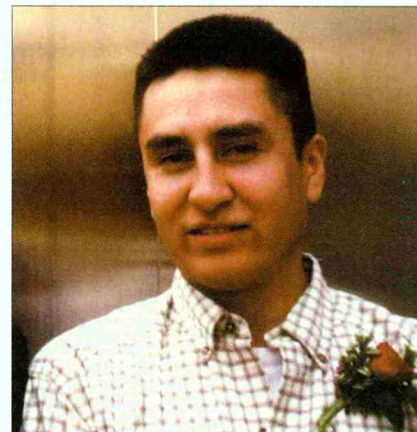
Both students say they are excited about the exposure and experience they will gain through the fellowship. Wallowing Bull says he wants to reach out to people and inform them of Native American history. "I don't want them to forget," he says. He hopes that through his art, he can "help people understand how other people feel."

Nicolson says her paintings are "contemporary works rooted in traditional concepts" and is grateful for the fellowship. She says she wants to learn more about the professional art scene in New York and to broaden her knowledge of her own cultural practices. She has seen button blankets made at the turn of the century with distinctive, elaborate styles, and she wants to study them in preparation for her own new exhibit.

Five fellowships will be offered in 2001. They are short-term residencies at the NMAI's George Gustav Heye Center in New York City. Nicolson and Wallowing Bull will arrive next April, and three other artists will accept their fellowships in May and June. — Jennifer David



Marianne Nicolson (Dzawa'da'enukw)



Star Wallowing Bull (Ojibwe Arapaho)

Nez Perce Sculptor Commemorates Chief Joseph

On October 5, 1877, Chief Joseph (Nez Perce) spoke his famous words, "I will fight no more forever," after a 1,400-mile, 3-month escape from the U.S. Army. Nez Perce men, women, and children suffered while they were in exile. Nez Perce sculptor Doug Hyde has commemorated the legacy of Chief Joseph with an 11-foot-tall, 3,000-pound bronze statue that now stands at the entrance to the Cultural Resources Center (CRC) in Suitland, Md.

Hyde lives in Santa Fe, N.M., where he has worked for 25 years. He is originally from the Nez Perce Reservation in northern Idaho. He delivered his sculpture to its site at the CRC from Albuquerque, N.M., a drive of almost 2,000 miles. On August 29, 2000, Hyde arrived at the CRC with the statue in the back of his three-quarter-ton pickup truck. "It was a very interesting sight," says Mark Clark, National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) museum specialist. "An 11-foot bronze Indian reclined rather stiffly in the back of a green pickup."

Working with Clark to select the best site for the sculpture, Hyde chose the space outside the visitor's entrance at the CRC so that the statue is visible from inside the rotunda and from outside as visitors approach along the broad entryway.

The statue of Chief Joseph was donated to the NMAI through the generous support of Dr. Jerry Kaye and Mrs. Adrienne Kay of Beverly Hills, Calif.

— Doris Bradley

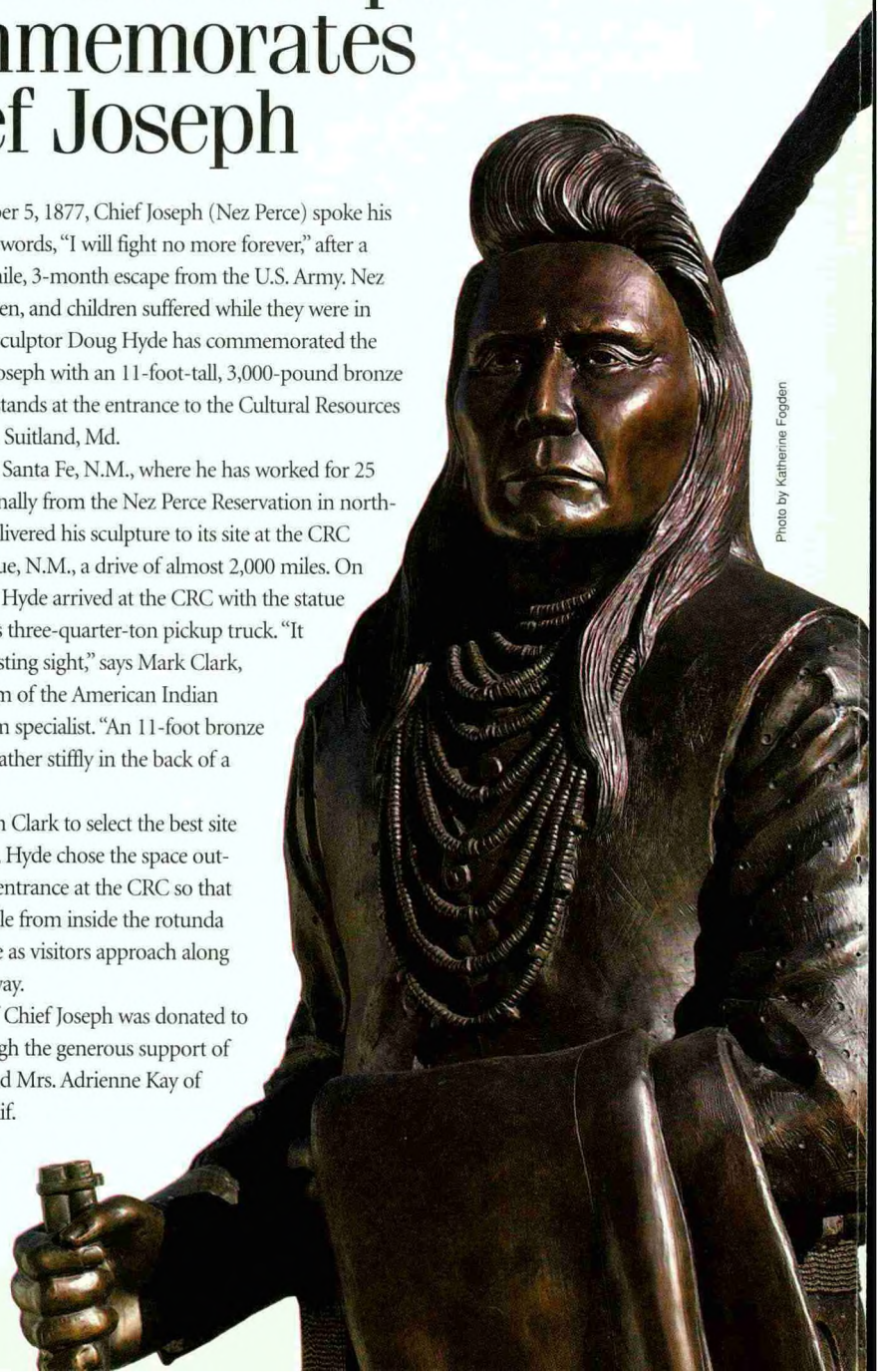


Photo by Katherine Fogden

NYC Subway Ads Promote Exhibit

It was not the kind of business suit most people were used to seeing on the New York City subway. Throughout December 2000, millions of riders looked up from their crowded seats at an 11-by-46-inch "car card" of a Hunkpapa Lakota shirt, circa 1875. The tag line read "Power Suits from the Great Plains." The advertisement appeared as part of the NMAI's promotion for its exhibit *Beauty, Honor, and Tradition: The Legacy of Plains Indian Shirts*.

Mounted in more than 1,000 cars on the subway lines, the ad showed one of the exhibit's 50 beaded, quilled, and ribboned shirts from the 19th and 20th centuries. Ann Silverman (Anishinabe), the Office of Exhibitions and Public Spaces project manager, explains why this shirt was chosen to represent the rest. "It was so dramatic. An underpinning of the show is to look at the shirts as art objects, to view their aesthetic beauty apart from ethnographic meaning." The exhibit, which opened on Dec. 10, 2000, and runs until Nov. 4, 2001, at the George Gustav Heye Center in Manhattan, also explores the shirts' spiritual power, history, iconography, and construction. From southern Canada to northern Texas, the shirts really were the



power suits of the Great Plains, made by women to honor warriors and heads of tribes, to adorn spiritual leaders, and to channel ani-

mal powers. They were worn both in battle and in peacetime, bearing imagery of important events and serving as tools to educate youth on the values of generosity, honor, and bravery displayed by the wearers.

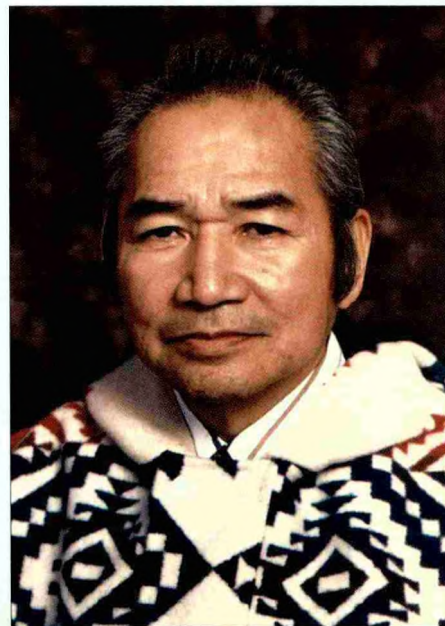
George Horse Capture (Gros Ventre), deputy assistant director of cultural resources, curated the exhibit with his son, Joseph Horse Capture (Gros Ventre), a curator at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. — Carrie Vaccaro

Renowned Activist Remembered

The world lost a great man on July 16, 2000. Bernard Julian Whitebear (Colville-Confederated Tribes), renowned American Indian activist, died of colon cancer at the age of 62. He first gained attention in 1970 when he led the historic takeover of Fort Lawton in Northwest Seattle after the federal government declared the land surplus. The city wanted it for a park, but Whitebear and several hundred other Indian activists occupied the compound to reclaim it. After three months of national attention (including a supporting visit from actress Jane Fonda), the city of Seattle negotiated and Whitebear's group was offered a 99-year lease on 20 acres. The Daybreak Star Center was built on the site, and the United Indians of all Tribes Foundation was established. Today the Foundation is an education and social services network, which employs 110 people and offers 13 educational, counseling, and other programs to approximately 4,500 people annually.

Whitebear served as a member of the National Museum of the American Indian's Board of Trustees. "There is just a wonderful consistency through time," says NMAI Director, W. Richard West. "He never really changed. He just sort of got bigger and bigger in life as he went along." West continues, "He was just such a good individual with great character and warmth. He was out at the very edge lots of times of what was going on in the Indian world, and yet was always so constructive and positive about it... and that is a rare gift."

Whitebear was originally from the Colville Indian Reservation, attended the University of Washington, and served in the U.S. Army as a Green Beret. The only dream that Whitebear did not see come to fruition is the People's Lodge, a community gathering place on the Daybreak Star Center property. But his family and friends are still working to make this dream become a reality. — Debra A. Crain

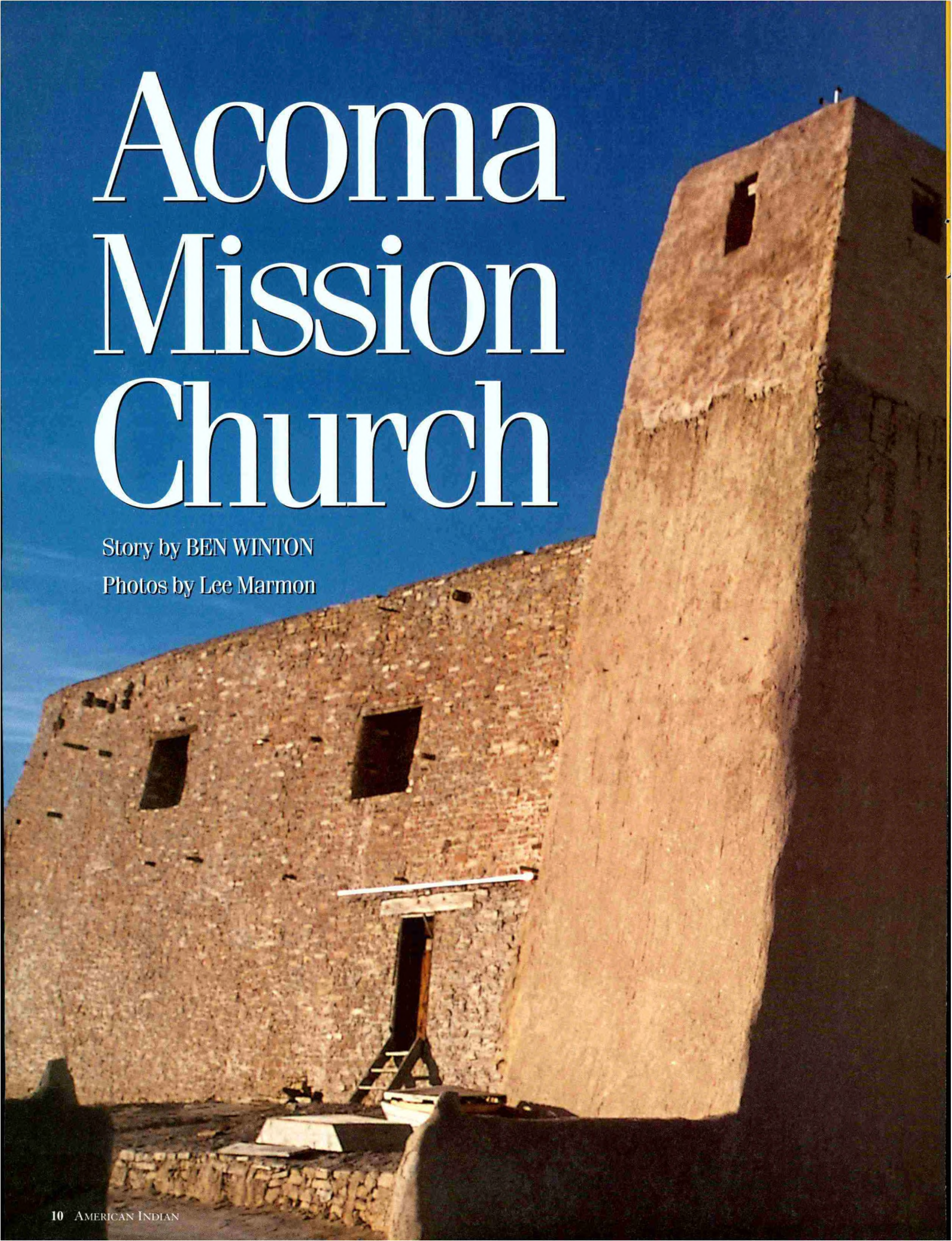


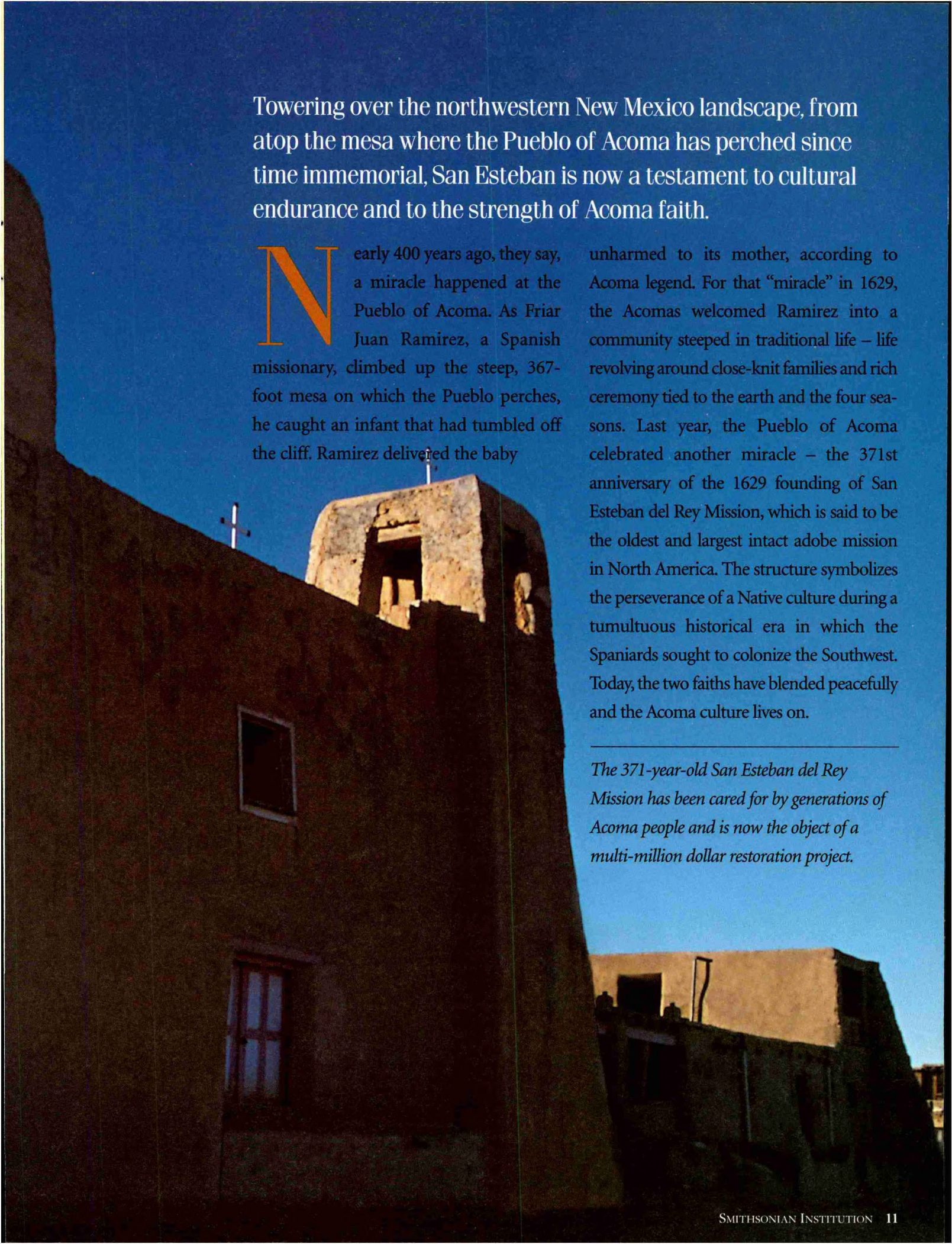
Bernard Julian Whitebear 1938–2000

Acoma Mission Church

Story by BEN WINTON

Photos by Lee Marmon





Towering over the northwestern New Mexico landscape, from atop the mesa where the Pueblo of Acoma has perched since time immemorial, San Esteban is now a testament to cultural endurance and to the strength of Acoma faith.

Nearly 400 years ago, they say, a miracle happened at the Pueblo of Acoma. As Friar Juan Ramírez, a Spanish missionary, climbed up the steep, 367-foot mesa on which the Pueblo perches, he caught an infant that had tumbled off the cliff. Ramírez delivered the baby

unharméd to its mother, according to Acoma legend. For that “miracle” in 1629, the Acomas welcomed Ramírez into a community steeped in traditional life – life revolving around close-knit families and rich ceremony tied to the earth and the four seasons. Last year, the Pueblo of Acoma celebrated another miracle – the 371st anniversary of the 1629 founding of San Esteban del Rey Mission, which is said to be the oldest and largest intact adobe mission in North America. The structure symbolizes the perseverance of a Native culture during a tumultuous historical era in which the Spaniards sought to colonize the Southwest. Today, the two faiths have blended peacefully and the Acoma culture lives on.

The 371-year-old San Esteban del Rey Mission has been cared for by generations of Acoma people and is now the object of a multi-million dollar restoration project.



At age 47, Everett Garcia can remember the story of Ramirez and the miracle as if it had happened yesterday. For a dozen generations in Garcia's family, the story and the duty to preserve the mission have been passed from father to son. It is the work of Everett Garcia and a handful of families who have continuously cared for the structure that make the anniversary celebration possible. Several times a year, they quietly gather from the land the same ingredients that originally formed the adobe walls of the church. Mixing earth with stone and straw, the workers replaster walls that have withstood centuries of weather and political upheavals and hosted countless Masses and traditional Acoma ceremonies.

San Esteban recently received a boost from a consortium of historic preservation and political interests around the United States, who say the mission also symbolizes the rich and diverse heritage of North America. In 1999, Hillary Rodham Clinton,

then-First Lady and honorary chair for the Millennium Committee to Save America's Treasures, visited the mission and proclaimed it one of the enduring manifestations of the vitality of the people who originally inhabited the area. "The earthen structure represents over 350 years of evolution of this region. It is a symbol of the zealotry of Spanish conquistadores, the tenacity of frontier settlers, and the profound spiritualism of the present-day Acoman," she said during her visit. The committee dedicated \$75,000 to the Cornerstones Community Partnerships, which will provide technical and material support to the members of the Pueblo of Acoma to continue refurbishing and maintaining the historic structure. Recently, the National Museum of the American Indian also recognized the importance of the mission by returning historical documentary photographs of the mission complex to the Pueblo of Acoma.

Archaeologists theorize that the Acoma

settled in the area in A.D. 1150, or almost 500 years before San Esteban del Rey was dedicated. The oral history of the people goes much further into the past, far beyond our imagination, to a time of creation and emergence into this world. The history tells how the Acoma (pronounced either EH-Ko-Ma or AH-Ko-Ma) had migrated to the area in search of *Haaku*, meaning "a place always prepared," or a spiritual homeland prepared for their eternal settlement. In 1540 Francisco Vasquez de Coronado's Spanish army visited Acoma, marking the period of the Spanish Entrada into North America in search of the fabled Seven Cities of Cibola, which were said to contain gold as rich as the Aztec and Inka empires of South America. They found the *Haaku*, as the Acoma call themselves, fully prepared – prepared to ward off outsiders, prepared to welcome them, as well, if the outsiders were friendly.

"The ascent was so difficult that we repented climbing to the top," a member of

Above: A street scene in Acoma "The Sky City", New Mexico.

Right: Acoma Mission Church, circa 1900.



Coronado's expedition wrote. Their repentance may have been interpreted as friendliness, for the Acoma did not immediately reject the outsiders. Acoma is "one of the strongest ever seen, because the city was built on a high rock," the expedition journal entry continued. In place of gold, the Spanish found "abundant supplies of maize, beans, and turkeys like those of New Spain."

Mount Taylor, 40 miles north of the Pueblo of Acoma, towers over the high, juniper-studded desert of northern New Mexico. The mountain is one of four, sacred to the 19 Pueblos of New Mexico, that surround the Pueblos in the four cardinal directions, east, to south, to west, and then north. Within the boundaries of the mountains, the Pueblo peoples say, all that is sacred exists. Prayers said within the mountains' boundaries have power. The Acomas and other Pueblo peoples say that what resides within these four sacred mountains is literally within the center of their universe. So when Ramirez persuaded the Pueblo of Acoma to build the mission, Mount Taylor became a logical source for the timbers that

would support the church roof. Acoma men carried 50-foot-long spruce timbers from the sacred mountainside, never once letting them touch the ground. Their origin, as well as their intended use in the mission, meant that the timbers had to be treated with the greatest respect. Also, on foot and by hand, the Acomas dredged up 20,000 tons of sacred earth and stone, and other building materials, to construct the 21,000-square-foot adobe mission complex.

Twelve years later, in 1641, Ramirez and the Pueblo of Acoma dedicated the mission. Building the structure had not been easy, and in the ensuing 40 years it became even more difficult to maintain. Relations between the Spaniards and the Pueblo peoples of northern New Mexico deteriorated. Spaniards alternately promoted and sought to stamp out Native ceremonies and all materials of "idolatry," which primarily included ceremonial objects. By 1675, tensions had reached a climax. That year, according to various historical accounts, Gov. Juan Francisco de Treviño cooperated with Franciscan missionaries who whipped 47 Pueblo leaders from various villages, whom they accused of "witchcraft" and "idolatry." The whippings ultimately fostered such bitter feelings that the event led to the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. Miraculously, some say, San Esteban del Rey Mission survived the revolt. Brian Vallo, director of the Pueblo of Acoma Historic Preservation Office, says that both its position high atop a mesa and the fact that it had become a part of Acoma traditional life may have helped protect it.

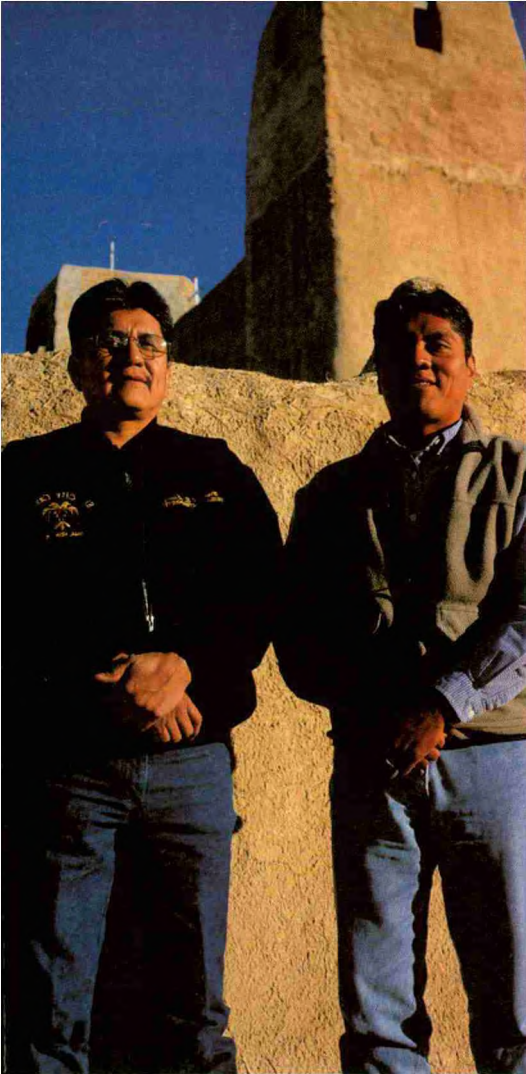
During the revolt, between 25,000 and 30,000 Pueblo people drove out the 2,350 Spaniards who had sought to convert and

colonize northern New Mexico. Twenty-one of the 33 missionaries and 375 of the Spaniards were killed. Vallo says that the mission failed to subsume Acoma culture; rather, Acoma traditions overtook and absorbed Roman Catholicism. "The structure means more than the Catholic faith itself," Vallo says. "We have integrated our own cultural practices within the faith." For example, Roman Catholic Mass is celebrated and traditional ceremonies are conducted within the confines of the mission structure.

Other examples of the merger are the observance of an elaborate feast day in honor of the patron saint, St. Stephen (San Esteban in Spanish); the four-day-long celebration of Christmas; and the observance of four specific saints' days (John, Peter, Paul, and Santiago, or James). "During these observances, one would witness the very close and unique tie between the obvious Catholic influence and the very obvious traditional Acoma activities such as traditional dances performed in honor of the saint and/or Christ child," Vallo said. "There would be minimal, if any, oversight of the event by Catholic priests; rather, tribal leadership or specific tribal individuals or families directly oversee all activities."

During its nearly four centuries, San Esteban del Rey Mission has become sacred space, where much of what defines the Acoma today, from ceremony to artifacts, resides within its 10-foot-thick walls. Everett Garcia may welcome the outside recognition and support that recently have been focused on the mission, but his work is an act of faith, he says, and his year-round maintenance a simple but important way of ensuring the continued cultural survival of the





Garcia prepares to hand over the duties of *Gaugashti* (pronounced gau-gaush-ti, meaning “encourager of the work”) to his son, Terrance.

Left: Caretaker Everett Garcia with Brian Vallo, director of the Pueblo of Acoma Historic Preservation Office.

Acoma people. “It’s an honor and a privilege to be involved in something as big as this,” says Garcia, who in daily life is a ranger with the Pueblo of Acoma Police Department. “I cannot stress enough what an honor it is. Knowing that I am doing something for my people that is sacred is the best reward of all.”

As Garcia prepares to hand over the duties of *Gaugashti* (pronounced gau-gaush-ti, meaning “encourager of the work”) to his son, Terrance, the church has become a symbol of the vitality of two faiths now interwoven as one. The two faiths reinforce each other, Garcia and others say. Garcia finds it difficult to describe the sacred nature of his work. Humility also drives his words. “I am just a maintenance worker. My faith is strengthened just knowing that I am doing something for my people,” he says.

“I have five brothers, and my father chose me to take his place when he left. It is a lifetime position. I now have spoken with my eldest son and told him that he would take over my position when I leave. He said, ‘It is a big responsibility. I don’t know if I can do it.’ I told him, ‘I will be here to show you.’” The elder Garcia explains that his son

hesitates only because he realizes the vital importance of the job to the perpetual survival of Acoma traditions.

The work itself is routine and simple – replaster walls, retouch wooden beams, perform other general maintenance – but the responsibility is not. For specific men, of certain families selected almost 400 years ago, to commit themselves to the care of a structure of its size and importance, and to expect their children to accept this duty on top of all the other social and modern-day pressures – these responsibilities are in fact a big deal. The caretaker’s responsibility is even greater now because the mission is beginning to require major structural repair and maintenance. A great deal of knowledge is required about the history associated with the mission’s construction and restoration over the centuries. And the costs of purchasing equipment and supplies and hiring architects and engineers can be daunting.

“At present, a community-based maintenance plan does not address the real needs and repairs of our mission,” said Vallo. “However, I do believe that Mr. Garcia and the other caretakers do find comfort in knowing that with the establishment of the historic preservation office and the Pueblo of Acoma Historic and Cultural Preservation Fund that will finance and manage this multimillion-dollar restoration project, their minimal but very important traditional role(s) will endure.”

So in that way, through the caretakers of generations of seven families, San Esteban del Rey, named after St. Stephen, one of the first apostles of Christ, has become an irrevocable part of the lives of Acoma. The seven families are headed by Everett Garcia, James Sanchez, Bennie Martin, Romero Martin, Ira Pino, Alvi Lewis Jr. (who succeeded his grandfather as a caretaker), and Phillip Martinez.

On the feast day of San Esteban, September 2, the mission becomes the focal

point of the community. The traditional Harvest Dance melds with the Roman Catholic observance of the annual feast of San Esteban. Traditional ceremony and Roman Catholic prayer blend inside the church walls. What goes on inside the church is so sacred that photography is prohibited. The sacrifices of the Acoma in building and maintaining the mission have contributed to the sacred nature of this space. “As we embark upon the challenge of restoring the San Esteban del Rey Mission and *convento*, it is important for us to reflect on the sacrifices made by our ancestors who constructed this massive mission complex,” Vallo said. “It was, after all, those same ancestors who maintained and prepared for us a way of life we now revere and will continue to uphold by passing on the oral legends of times passed to future Acoma generations, who will become the caretakers of these treasures, and who will ensure the survival of our Acoma people. I am truly honored to be a part of such a rich and living history.”

Two faiths – traditional Acoma and Roman Catholic – have become one over many centuries. A community has survived the incursion of outside settlers who sought to colonize their villages. Towering over the northwestern New Mexico landscape, from atop the mesa where the Pueblo of Acoma has perched since time immemorial, San Esteban is now a testament to cultural endurance and to the strength of Acoma faith. But no one needs to tell that to Everett Garcia and the people of Acoma. “We have been taught that our main goal is to keep the church preserved. For in doing so, we are preserving our heritage, our culture. And that is nothing to take lightly.” ■

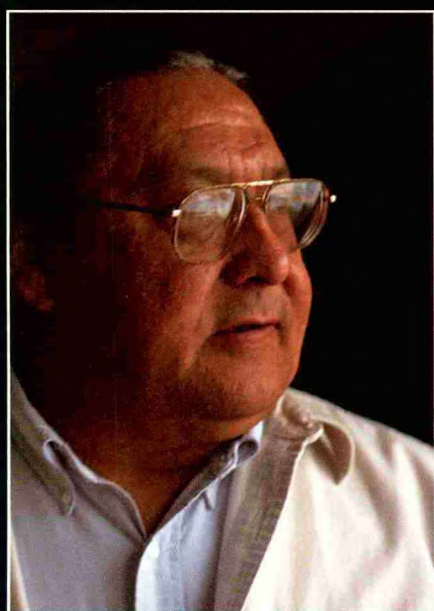
Ben Winton (Pascua Yaqui) is a former newspaper reporter and magazine editor who now freelances for publications throughout North America.

For further information about the restoration of the mission, contact the Pueblo of Acoma Historic Preservation Office, (505) 552-9426.

Darrell Kipp is one of dozens of Native peoples from around the country fighting to revitalize their language – a movement that has gained momentum, and urgency, in the last decade.

Stemming the Tide

Story by RITA PYRILLIS / Photos by KEN BLACKBIRD



“This is the toughest business you could get into. You are going against the grain of American society, and you are fighting a longstanding generational dogma that says ‘Don’t speak your language in school.’”

Darrell Kipp has sat at the deathbed of more than a few Native languages. As a Blackfoot educator and language activist, he knows well “that feeling of tremendous grief” when a language slips away. And he has devoted his life to making sure that his endures.

Kipp is one of dozens of Native peoples from around the country fighting to revitalize their languages – a movement that has gained momentum, and urgency, in the last decade. From the California coast to the Southwestern desert to the Florida Everglades, many Native communities are looking for ways to ensure the survival of their languages. These efforts have taken many forms, including private immersion schools, CD-ROM language instruction, and kitchen-table learning among adults. Some programs have tribal council and community support, and some do not.

“This is the toughest business you could get into,” Kipp says from his office at the Piegan Institute, a private, nonprofit organization in Browning, Mont. that is dedicated to promoting and preserving Native languages. Kipp, a co-founder of the institute, helped develop the Nizi Puh Wah Sin School “Real Speak” Immersion Schools on the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana. “You are going against the grain of American society, and you are fighting a longstanding generational dogma that says ‘Don’t speak your language in school,’” he says, referring to the

boarding-school experiences of many elders in his community. “It is an extremely difficult task, changing a collective mind view. We’ve done a lot of community seminars and attitudes are changing, but time is running out.”

This sense of growing urgency is justified, according to the Indigenous Language Institute (ILI, formerly known as IPOLA) in Santa Fe, N.M. Of an estimated 300 languages spoken in the territorial United States when Columbus landed here in 1492, only 175 are still spoken. But of these, only 20 are being passed down to infants and children – a critical link in perpetuating language. Several communities have only a handful of speakers. Some tribes, like the Cahuilla in Southern California, are down to the last fluent speaker of their native language. When these people die, much more than just their language is lost.

“We still have some of our dances, but we’ve lost the Flower Dance, the Kick Dance, some of our ceremonies,” says James Jackson Jr., who at 91 is one of four remaining Native speakers of the Hupa language among nearly 2,000 tribal members. “Those things are gone because certain people are gone.” Jackson teaches the language once a week at the Hoopa Community Center in Hoopa, Calif. – in a state that once had the densest concentration of indigenous languages in North America. His grandson, who teaches Hupa at the local high school, says that language is more than a way to communi-

cate, it is “a reflection of the people.” In Hupa “there is no gender, the aspect of time is different, there is no East or West, just upstream and downstream,” he explains. “Learning your language gives you a different and a larger worldview.”

Dying Languages Are No Accident

To understand why Native languages are dying requires a quick look at government policies. For nearly a century, Native American languages, as well as Native Hawaiian, were the target of government policies to eradicate them. In 1869 a federal commission on Indian Affairs concluded: “In the difference of language lies two-thirds of our trouble. Their barbarous dialect should be blotted out and the English language substituted.” The commission concluded that “through sameness of language is produced sameness of sentiment, and thought.” Not until 1990 did the federal government reverse its hostile attitude toward Native languages when Congress passed the Native American Languages Act, which set forth a policy of preserving indigenous languages.

Ground zero for eliminating Native tongues were government- and mission-run boarding schools, where students were forbidden to speak their language and often were physically punished for doing so, even up until the 1950s. A favored technique – one that Jackson recalls in his mission boarding-school experience – was washing a student’s mouth out with soap. These practices and attitudes left deep psychological scars among many Native people, making them reluctant to pass their language on. Boarding-school experiences had “a devastating generational effect,” according to Kipp.

A Number of Approaches

At the Nizi Puh Wah Sin School, language immersion begins at preschool, and parents are urged to speak Blackfoot at home. English at school is strictly forbidden. Five days a week, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., students from preschool and kindergarten through eighth grade learn reading, writing, and arithmetic, among other subjects, entirely in Blackfoot. Tribal beliefs and traditions are reflected everywhere, even in the construction of the buildings.

There are only a handful of true immersion schools in the nation. The Blackfeet program was inspired by one of the first and most successful – the Punano Leo schools in Hawaii. In 15 years, the Hawaiian schools

have grown from a few volunteers running a preschool with 12 students to a \$5-million-a-year enterprise with 130 employees and 11 private Hawaiian-language schools, the world’s most sophisticated native language computer network, and millions of dollars in university scholarships. The Punano Leo schools were inspired by the Maori in New Zealand and the Mohawks of Canada.

Experts believe that these types of immersion schools succeed where many other efforts fail: in the home. Many schools, like Punano Leo, require parents also to become fluent in their native language and to promise that they will speak it at home.

Kipp believes that total immersion, in which the language being learned is the only one spoken, is the most effective way to preserve language. But he also acknowledges that such programs are the most difficult to get off the ground. Most immersion schools are privately funded and require a high degree of community involvement and support.

Inee Yang Slaughter, executive director of ILI, agrees. “Yes, these types of schools would be the ideal. But about 80 percent of Native communities are not able to pursue the dream of an immersion school,” she says. “This is due, for one, to a lack of speakers in the community, and, as a result, teachers. You need a cadre of people to teach and run an immersion school.”

Slaughter said each community has unique needs and resources and that all efforts to revitalize language need to be honored. For communities with only a handful of older Native speakers, a master-apprentice program can be very effective. This one-on-one approach is one way to adhere to the concept of immersion, but on a smaller, more workable scale, Slaughter explains. “We honor everybody’s effort for the sheer love of what this means to us,” she says. “A total immersion school is just as important as two folks sitting around a kitchen table learning their language.” A good example of one-on-one learning can be found in the Tlingit community in Carcross, Ala. Their program is one of three language revitalization efforts profiled in a documentary film called *Finding My Talk: A Journey Through Aboriginal Languages*, by Canadian filmmaker Paul M. Rickard (see sidebar).

Whatever the approach, the most important ingredient in developing a successful language revitalization program, according to Slaughter, is “sheer determination and the



will to begin.”

For Jessie Little Doe, love and determination are the forces driving her to accomplish what some have called impossible: reviving a language that has not been spoken in more than 100 years. For the past seven years, Little Doe, a member of the Mashpee Tribe on Cape Cod, has been on a mission to “reclaim” the Wampanoag language. Little Doe, who prefers the term “reclamation” to describe her efforts, points out that the issues her community faces are different from those who have even one or two Native speakers. “Folks revitalizing their language



are looking at a current piece of the culture," she explains. "Reclamation is about discovering that piece."

It has been a daunting effort. Known descendents of the original Wampanoag speakers number only 2,500, and Little Doe is trying to create a spoken language out of a language that existed only in documents, many from the 17th century. In spite of these obstacles, Little Doe, who received a Ph.D. in linguistics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in June 2000, says her efforts have widespread support both in the community and among fellow linguists.

Little Doe hopes that other Native communities without speakers will be inspired by her community's example. "A lot of times I read that if you don't have your language, you don't have your culture," she says. "But that can't be true because we're still here. We still have Wampanoag culture, songs, and dances. But using the language helps us pray better. It is a special gift. It's made me understand why I view things the way I do. There is something powerful in that. It has brought our people together."

Community support and determination are two components necessary in developing

a language program. Another is taking a realistic look at the status of the language, according to Slaughter. How many Native speakers are there? How many children are learning the language? These are just a few of the questions communities must ask themselves. "There is a reality gap out there," Kipp says. "A lot of people assume their language is relatively strong, but most tribes don't have any children that speak their language. You need to take a realistic view of what you're facing and deal with it."

In 1997, the Hopi did just that, with a survey that revealed that only 10 to 15 percent



Nizi Puh Wah Sin School's second grade students tell a story in Blackfoot sign language.

of Hopi under 20 years old were fluent. Although the language is not in danger of dying, according to a Hopi professor and linguist who preferred not to be identified, the results were alarming. As a result, the tribal council passed a mandate to teach Hopi at the tribally run, federally funded schools. In addition, the tribe compiled a comprehensive Hopi dictionary, far more advanced than the lexicons done in the early 1990s, and it was published in 1998 by the

University of Arizona Press. Also, the tribe asked the professor to develop courses using interactive television so that all schools could have access to lessons and to provide teacher training.

Today, Hopi schoolchildren from kindergarten through high school study the language as a discipline, like math or science. Although the ultimate goal is to create speakers, students must also learn to read and write Hopi and to study grammar and

syntax. Hopi officials say it's too soon to determine how successful their approach has been. Success can be difficult to quantify for many programs, especially smaller ones, according to Slaughter, because success means different things to different communities. But the ultimate goal for most language revitalization programs is simple: creating Native speakers.

Success also depends on changing attitudes toward language revitalization on an individual, community, and national level. Community activists like Kipp, Little Doe, and others are creating awareness one community at a time, but more support is needed on a national level, according to John Cheek, executive director of the National Indian Education Association in Washington, D.C. "It's about changing the attitude of Congress, which very much has an English-only attitude," he says. "Until that happens, it's up to individuals and Native communities to help stem the tide of languages being lost." ■

Rita Pyrrillis (Cheyenne River Sioux) is a freelance writer living in Evanston, Ill.

Filmmaker Documents Language Reclamation

Many Native activists concerned about the loss of their language can recall the defining moment that spurred them into action. For Cree filmmaker Paul Rickard, that moment came when he saw the results of a 1998 Canadian survey on aboriginal languages predicting the survival of only three of 50 once prominent languages by century's end and realized he didn't speak a word of his Native language. "It was shocking," he said. "I'm not fluent in Cree and I had to ask myself why."

What began as a personal journey for the roots of his language resulted in a one-hour documentary called *Finding My Talk: A Journey Through Aboriginal Languages*. The film, which aired in November 2000 on the Aboriginal People's Television Network (APTN), profiles the efforts of three Native Canadian communities—Tlingit, Mohawk, and Inuktitut—to preserve and revitalize their language. Rickard chose three communities with different levels of language prominence, from Carcross in the Yukon, where elders struggle to preserve Tlingit, one of the most endangered languages in Canada, to Iqaluit, where the Inuktitut language is thriving.

What Rickard found only scratched the surface of language revitalization efforts in Canada. In fact, he discovered enough material for a 13-part series called *Finding Our Talk: A Journey Into*

Aboriginal Languages. Part one airs in February on APTN in Canada and, like the one-hour pilot, is produced in Cree with English, French, and Inuktitut versions.

His greatest challenge, Rickard said, was portraying the subject of language in a visual and compelling way. "I wanted to show what people in the community were doing to keep their language alive, as opposed to linguists just sitting and talking," he explained. Those efforts ranged from Tlingit elders teaching the language to willing "apprentices" to children's puppet shows produced in Inuktitut and broadcast on local television.

The series will focus on the efforts of many other communities. The languages profiled include Attikamekw, Ojibway, Saulteaux, Huron, and Saanich. In addition to the series, Rickard is developing a Web site so viewers can access more information and share their own stories. "I hope people will see what's happening over there and say 'Hey, we can do that here,'" he said. "I hope we can get people talking and working together. People are doing some amazing things that I hope will inspire others to look at their language with new appreciation." — Rita Pyrrillis

For more information on the series, contact Paul Rickard at mushkeg@video.tron.ca.

Keepers of the Loom

There is hope and joy in knowing that, through weaving, the women of Tampur will continue to bring spiritual and cultural strength to the Mayan people of Guatemala

In the lowlands of Guatemala, amid the beauty of the Polochic Valley...

lies the village of Tampur where Juana Chiquin kneels before a loom. Her long hair, pulled back off her face, falls in strands around her neck. Her hands, creased and calloused with labor, move along the delicate, embroidery-like weaving she stretches across her lap. She leans back on her loom and smiles as she welcomes visitors into the courtyard of her thatched-roof hut. The packed dirt is swept clean, and her grandchildren are laughing and playing around her as she works. Their parents harvest

strap loom," explains Roderico Teni, director of the Association of Economic, Educational and Cultural Development (ADEEC), a Maya-based nongovernmental organization that helps women in Tampur reclaim their weaving culture. "The colors and designs depend upon inspirations that each weaver has, taking into consideration their environment; in other words, animals, plants, humans and nature."

With cotton and brilliant dyes, her hands repeat a creation ritual that tells her ancient

threads are attached; a strap for the back; and some rope. Additional sticks are used as "shed rods" to allow thread to be woven between the warp threads. One end of the loom is tied to a post or tree, and the other end is strapped around the weaver's hips. Tension on the threads is created by the weight of the woman's body. The weft (transverse) thread is inserted and slid through the warp threads and then pushed into place by a beater.

The threads are now colored with chemical



beans in the hot fields below the village.

"Doña Juana Chiquin is the grandmother of the weavers in the community, and she is Pocomchí. She is originally from Tamahú (up the Polochic River toward Coban) and then later came to Tampur. She now speaks Q'eqchí and Pocomchí but weaves just as her Pocomchí ancestors did – using a back-

tale. Teni's and Chiquin's people are descended from the ancient Mayan civilization that extended from the Yucatan Peninsula to present-day Mexico, Belize, Honduras, and Guatemala.

The loom she is using is typical of Guatemalan women's looms – it requires two sticks, where the warp (lengthwise)

dyes, but historically the women of the lowlands used natural substances – the secretions from a mollusk for the brilliant purples; for the greens, *taray* from an evergreen bush of the lush Alta Verapaz area or yellow from a type of ginger root mixed with the blue of indigo. The width of the weaving is usually the width of the woman

Above: Mayan women returning from the Polochic Valley. Above Right: Close-up of Chiquin's delicate weaving.

herself, and the long, narrow swaths of cloth are often sewn together to create larger pieces, which are sold in the local market.

"They weave with total concentration, inspired by their surroundings, above all—the colors and the people, immersed in the culture of the region," explains Teni. With the help of ADEEC, the community also built a school, developed a gravity-fed water system, and developed a weaving program for 40 women, girls, and elders in the community. "The women in each community organized a 'weaving committee,' which is responsible for coordinating the weaving activities and process. A plan is prepared and practical teaching methods are utilized," he says.

Tampur, home to 2,000 Q'eqchi' and Pocomchi' Maya people, became an official

agreed to by the elders and community leaders. The families base their agricultural practices on an indigenous Mayan spiritual system, the *Calendario*, with planting and harvesting techniques that seek to harmonize with nature. Tampur is a testament to the strength and resilience of the Mayan people.

Women had been the only weavers in Guatemala until the Spanish conquest in the 16th century. Then the Spaniards introduced the treadle loom, designed for speed and production. In Spain, weaving was male dominated, so the Spanish invaders began to teach the Mayan men how to operate the treadle loom, thus changing the social structure of weaving in Guatemala. But although the men produced woven goods on the treadle loom, their results cannot be compared to the craftsmanship of the women and their backstrap looms. The women have more control, using their bodies as the source of tension and manipulation, and combinations of motifs can be created that are just not possible with a treadle loom. Weaving is the thread that winds through the daily lives of Mayan women, something they do between chores and while the children nap. In Guatemala, when a woman weaves, she reveals her world.

Chiquin weaves in the style of her mother and her mother's mother. Her repetitive triangle and diamond shapes, as well as sharp, undifferentiated zigzags, are the mark of Chiquin's village. Some believe they echo the imagery of the ancient Mayan city of Quirigua, just south of Lake Izabal. Others believe that the zigzags represent lightning, and some say the triangles can be seen as agricultural symbols. "She weaves because of her identity as an indigenous person – for cultural and spiritual reasons," Teni explains. "There is no tourism."

Indeed, this area is not known for its tourism – it has become known for different and more violent reasons. In Panzos, due east along the river, more than 120 Mayan men, women, and children died in 1978 at the hands of the Guatemalan Army for taking part in a demonstration demanding land rights. They were buried in a mass grave. The guerrilla movement regained momentum, and life for indigenous Guatemalans became a living nightmare.

In other parts of the country, such as the highlands surrounding Lake Atitlan, the Mayan women have lived in similar hells –



losing husbands, brothers, and entire families. Now their weaving is a source of financial independence. Large cooperatives have been established in tiny villages in the highlands where more than 45,000 women were widowed by the war. Tourists seek out their products, and their well-known and well-marketed *huipiles* (women's blouses), shirts, bags, and wall hangings appear in sharp contrast to the simpler and lighter weavings of Chiquin. No tourist will see her work, not without a grueling trip down the treacherous roads and through the steamy jungle paths to Tampur.

The foot trail from the closest city, La Tinta, goes east along the riverbank for an hour or two. At the river crossing, a brightly painted dugout canoe takes passengers over to the Tampur side, where the path winds through the dense jungle until it reaches the village. The stones that line the dirt roads become lush green hedges, and the vines make way for the huts perched along the riverbank.

In Chiquin's courtyard, a small yet truly significant movement exists for the Mayan people. With women like Chiquin as keepers of the loom, in this beautiful land that has seen so much pain, there is hope for the future of the Maya. There is hope and joy in knowing that they, through weaving, will continue to bring spiritual and cultural strength to the Mayan people of Guatemala. ■

Nancy Ackerman (Mohawk) is a freelance journalist who lives in Nova Scotia.

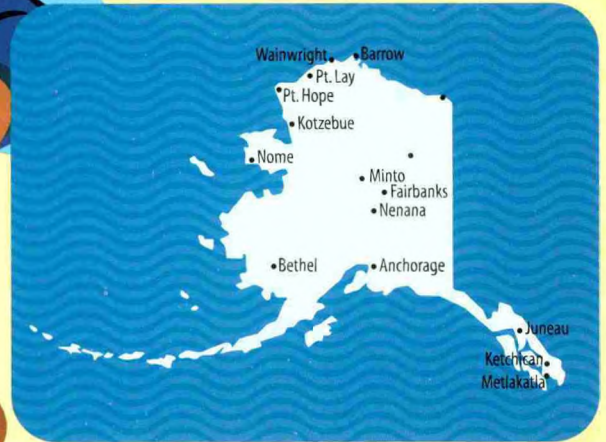


village on July 19, 1977, and was legally recognized the same month by the National Institute for Agrarian Transformation, a federal agency. Teni points out that the community founders came from families who had labored in the nearby German-owned coffee plantations.

From the beginning, the people of Tampur were determined to create a village that thrives on the Mayan communal spirit. Most of the families still share in the tasks

Coyote's Place

SHAWN TERMIN & JOHANNA GORELICK



One, two, three — whee!

I'm watching a blanket toss at the World Eskimo-Indian Olympics in Fairbanks, Alaska. Did you know that Native Americans have their own Olympic ceremony? It started in 1961. These Olympics have games like the Knuckle Hop, the Four-Man Carry, and the Blanket Toss. The Blanket Toss, or Nalukataq, is one of the most popular events at the World Eskimo-Indian Olympics (WEIO). It's no wonder why. It's fun to watch people fly high up in the air!

The blanket is not like a blanket you may know. It is made from several seal or walrus skins sewn together. It is huge. Around the edges, ropes are looped through holes and used as handles. It takes about 40 people, called "pullers," to hold the handles and keep the blanket taut. A jumper stands in the middle of the blanket. The pullers pull the skin tight, tossing the jumper in the air. A good jumper can go as high as 30 to 40 feet. It's like a trampoline. The pullers must keep their eyes on the jumper. They must watch to see where the jumper is going to land and move the blanket accordingly. This game of skill has been around Native Alaskan communities for generations. The Blanket Toss teaches people how to work together.

Great ready for the Olympics

Alaskan children are just like you and me — they love to play games! It's cold in Alaska. The games they play teach skills that would be useful for living in the cold environment. Some of the Native people of Alaska live off the land — they hunt animals, catch fish, and gather plants for food and medicine. They have to be very strong to live in this environment. Native families gather every year to have a feast, meet with old friends, tell stories, dance, and show off their skills in these games. They also gather every year in Fairbanks at the WEIO to celebrate the skills of their ancestors and to continue their traditions.

This is the largest cultural celebration in Alaska.

The Olympics bring together six major Native nations from throughout Alaska — the Aleut, Athabascan, Inupiaq, Yup'ik, Haida, Tlingit, and Tsimpsian. The World Eskimo-Indian Olympics logo is six interwoven rings, representing the unity of these six Native groups. People from these nations come together every year to cooperate, not to compete. They feast on traditional Native foods, dance, and play games together. In fact, they do not use the word "opponent" in these games. This

is because everyone's attempt is awarded with great applause. All the athletes strive to reach their own personal goals and to do their best.

The Olympics feature many different games. Some games test the athletes' strength and endurance. One game is called the Knuckle Hop. In this event, the only parts of the body that can touch the ground are the knuckles and toes. The objective of this game is to see how far one can move by hopping in a push-up position. Imagine how difficult that is!



Meet my friend Brad Weyiouanna. He has competed in the WEIO games since he was in seventh grade. At that time he was often the youngest participant. Though he did not always win the competition, he received a lot of help and encouragement from the more experienced athletes. Their support motivated Brad, and he went on to win bronze, silver, and finally gold medals in various events. His best events have been the high kicks (below). These events are very popular and draw large crowds. Now Brad coaches the high school Native Youth Olympic teams for Fairbanks.

Another game is the Four-man Carry. The seal or walrus meat that a successful hunter might have to carry home could weigh as much as four men. A hunter would have to travel a great distance with this heavy load. In this Olympic event, the winner is the one who travels the farthest carrying four men on his back.

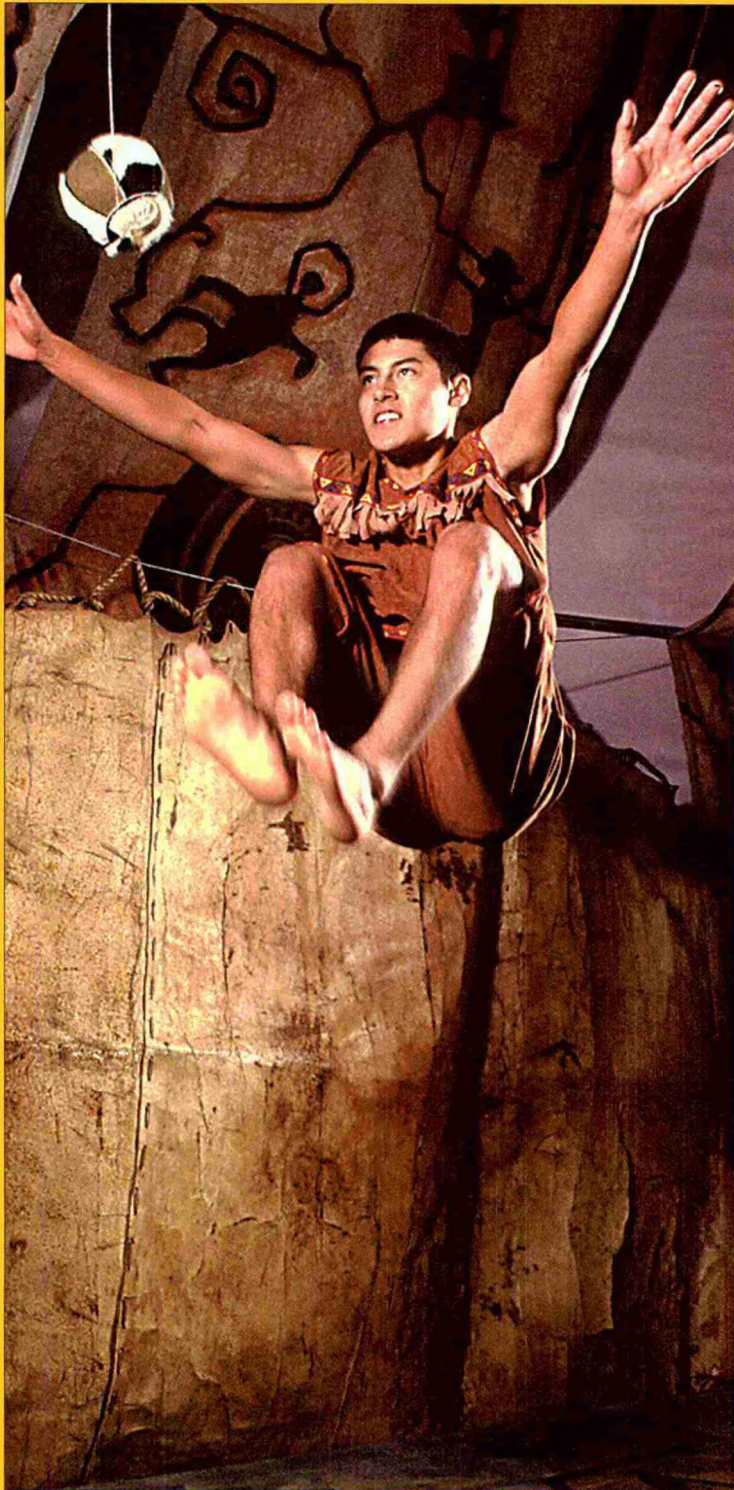


Photo by Barry McWayne, University of Alaska Museum

Ring & Pin Game

The ring-and-pin game is played by men and women, young and old. The game teaches eye-hand coordination skills that are useful in hunting and fishing. It is played across many Native nations of the Americas – from the Arctic through South America. The materials vary according to the different environments. The well-known cup-and-ball game is a version of this game. The objective is to get the pin through the ring.

What you'll need to make the ring-and-pin game:

A stick, about 10 inches long

A 13-inch piece of string or rope

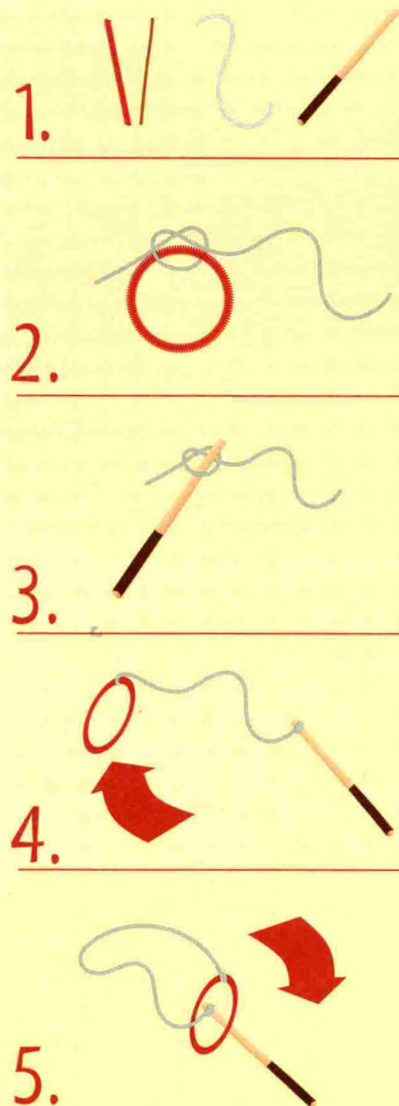
A pipe cleaner or piece of wire

Instructions:

Make a ring with the pipe cleaner or wire, any size you want.

Tie one end of the string to the ring. Tie the other end of the string 1 to 1 1/2 inches from the end of the stick.

Hold the stick in front of you and thrust it forward and up, so that the ring swings in the air. Try to catch it on the end of the stick. Challenge yourself by making the ring smaller.





Weaving Humor With Artistry

Indian Arts and Crafts Board Collection reveals both the traditional skill and sly humor of Native basket-makers

by ANN McMULLEN

More than 8,000 objects from the headquarters of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board – created within the U.S. Department of the Interior in 1935 to promote Indian economic development by encouraging production and marketing of Indian crafts – became part of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI)'s collection last year. The collection includes many items that anyone might consider “traditional” within the scope of American Indian material culture. Other pieces represent a distinct “bending” of cultural rules and even poke fun at non-Native expectations about tradition and how it might be expressed, including a general belief that tradition – as something handed down over generations – is necessarily static or unchanging in its expression. A number of these objects are unique in the way their makers have combined their skill in traditional techniques with forms that might appeal to non-Native buyers.

In reviewing objects from the Indian Arts and Crafts Board collections, I was struck by the number of animal effigy pieces included: wood carvings, carved stone, ceramic pieces, and even baskets. And as a “basket person,” I was immediately drawn to these baskets made in the shapes of animals. Many were made by Tohono O’odham basket-makers in Arizona, who have long made such works; others were made by the Coushatta (also called Koasati) of Louisiana and Texas. Among these tribes, the tradition of making animal effigy baskets dates to the earlier part of the twentieth century, when unknown

basket-makers experimented with the forms they made and stretched the rules for what constituted the idea of “baskets” as containers and what might be called “tradition” by creating basketry items that were not truly containers.

Making objects in the form of animals has a long and well-established history in American Indian material culture, exemplified by Eastern Woodlands wooden bowls in the shape of animals and animal-effigy stone pipes on the Plains. Since organic materials do not survive well in archaeological contexts, we know less about whether animal-shaped baskets were made thousands of years ago. Yet we do know that basketry technologies were sometimes used to create duck decoys or small figures of animals in times past and that some tribes, such as the Paiute, have continued these traditions to the present

day. Given the long traditions of effigy making and basketry, we might even wonder why they have not been combined in Native arts more often.

The baskets illustrated here are from three different tribes, all from very different parts of North America. Among Yupik Eskimo peoples of southwest Alaska, near the mouth of the Kuskokwim River, seals have always been important to economic and spiritual life; many tools and other items take the form of seals and other marine mammals. Since at least the 1930s, basketry has also been made for sale in those communities, often in the form of small bowls or other forms decorated with animals,



2.

birds, and plants. Yet here, the unknown artist has stepped beyond using the seal as part of a basket’s decoration and has instead used her (all Yupik basket-makers are women) expertise to create a complete seal effigy.

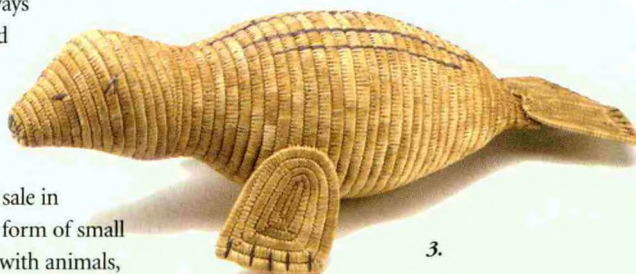
Although they were undoubtedly made for sale, the Coushatta owl effigy and the Tohono O’odham sheep effigy basket should not be dismissed as “trinkets,” made simply to suit the tastes of non-Native buyers. Like the Yupik basket-maker who created the seal, their makers combined their skills with their specific conceptions of animals – including animals important to their traditional ways of life – and of animals’ place in the world, weaving humor and artistry together to share with others as they made fun of non-Native collectors of animal figurines and other mass-produced items by working within that nontraditional genre. Along with other baskets and other effigies, these are part of traditions that continue to grow and change yet remain fundamentally Native in the ways they combine art, humor, and life.

Ann McMullen is a curator for the National Museum of the American Indian.



1.

1. Owl effigy basket made by Rosabel Sylestine (Coushatta, b. 1928), Allen Parish, Bayou Blue, Louisiana, circa 1976.
2. Sheep effigy basket, Tohono O’odham, Ariz., 1970.
3. Seal effigy basket, Yupik Eskimo, Alaska, circa 1960.



3.

"Innovative...this contemporary version of a classic American Indian tale will delight readers both young and old."

Dallas Morning News

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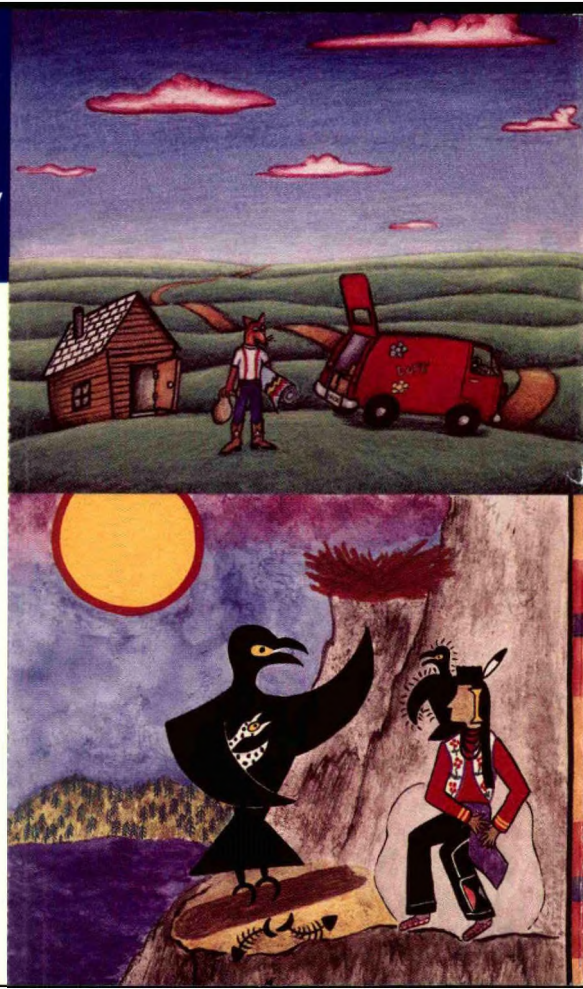
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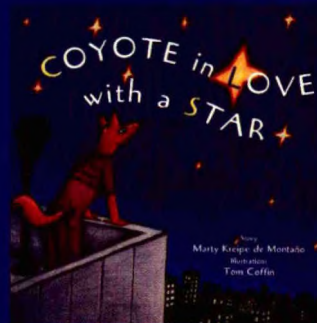
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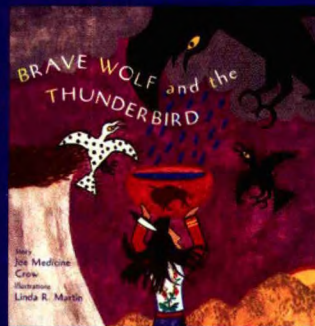


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Coyote in Love with a Star

A delightful Potawatomi adaptation of a traditional tale about the trickster-hero known to many as Coyote. Author: Marty Kreipe de Montañño (Prairie Band Potawatomi). Illustrator: Tom Coffin (Prairie Band Potawatomi—Creek).



Brave Wolf and the Thunderbird

A stirring story featuring the Thunderbird—regarded by the Crow people as the most powerful of all spirits. Author: Joe Medicine Crow (Crow). Illustrator: Linda R. Martin (Navajo).

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CALENDAR of EVENTS

FEBRUARY/MARCH/APRIL 2001

People gather at Mt. Shasta (from the film *In the Light of Reverence*).



EXHIBITIONS

POWER OF THE PLAINS

THROUGH NOV. 4

BEAUTY, HONOR, AND TRADITION: THE LEGACY OF PLAINS INDIAN SHIRTS

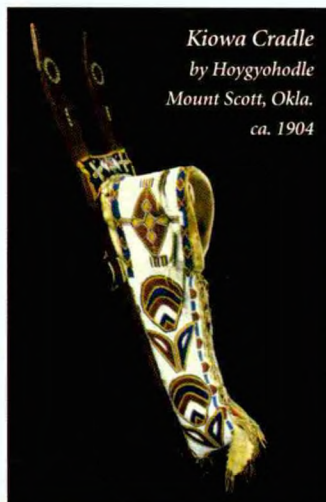
Featuring 50 visually stunning and spiritually powerful Plains Indian shirts from the Museum's collection, the show explores the beauty, power, history, iconography, construction, and materials of Plains Indian shirts from the 19th and 20th centuries. Curated by George Horse Capture (Gros Ventre), NMAI's deputy assistant director of cultural resources, and his son, Joe Horse Capture, the exhibition is presented in collaboration with the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

MARCH 4 – MAY 27

GIFTS OF PRIDE AND LOVE: KIOWA AND COMANCHE CRADLES

This traveling exhibition features historic Kiowa and Comanche lattice cradleboards as well as two specially commissioned cradles.

Among the most beautiful expressions of Plains Indian bead design of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the cradles are technically intricate, brilliant in color and design, and practical in function. Lattice cradles, the preferred type of cradle in the southern Plains among Kiowa and Comanche from about 1870 to 1910, assist in socializing babies by elevating them to eye level with adults. Curated by Barbara A. Hail, Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, Brown University, and presented in collaboration with



the Kiowa/Comanche Consulting Committee.

MARCH 4 – MAY 27

NEWBORN ANCESTORS: THE ART AND ARTICLES OF PLAINS INDIAN CHILDREN

Cradleboards, clothing, and games, contextualized by historical and contemporary photographs from the Museum's collection, offer insights into traditions that nurture the lives of Native children from the Great Plains, from infancy to young adulthood. Curated by George Horse Capture (Gros Ventre), the exhibition was first displayed at the San Francisco Airport galleries in 1998.

APRIL 5 – OCT. 7

PAINTING THE DAKOTA: SETH EASTMAN AT FORT SNELLING

The 56 featured watercolor paintings from the Duncan McMillan collection – some never before on public display – are considered some of the most important visual records of everyday Dakota life in Minnesota during the mid-19th century. Eastman was the leading pictorial historian of Native Americans in the

19th century and a career army officer assigned to frontier duty at Fort Snelling.

ONGOING

ALL ROADS ARE GOOD: NATIVE VOICES ON LIFE AND CULTURE

Twenty-three Native American selectors from throughout the Western Hemisphere chose more than 300 objects from the Museum's collection to display for their artistic, spiritual, and personal significance.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

FEB. 21 – 24

THE ART OF STORYTELLING

Clinton Elliott (Anishinabe) and James Greeley (Wasco/Hopi) lead a series of programs and workshops that share the tradition and art of storytelling.

Storytelling at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.
Workshops at noon and 3 p.m.
Education Classroom and Exhibition Galleries

MARCH 22

WINONA LADUKE

Celebrate Women's History Month with Winona LaDuke (Ojibwa), founder of the Indigenous Women's Network. Chosen in 1995 as one of Time's "50 Leaders for the Future," LaDuke is the author of *All Our Relations*, a book on Native environmentalism, and the novel, *Last Standing Woman*.

6:30 p.m.
Auditorium

APRIL 5

BEADING BASICS

Learn basic beading techniques in this hands-on workshop. Enrollment is limited.



Smithsonian
National Museum of the American Indian

Advance registration required; please call 212-514-3714. Materials fee \$8.00 (\$6.00 for members). 16 years and up. 6 p.m. Education Classroom

APRIL 5

SETH EASTMAN: PAINTING THE DAKOTA ART TALK AND BOOK SIGNING

Marybeth Lorbiecki, author of the accompanying catalog for the exhibition *Painting the Dakota: Seth Eastman at Fort Snelling*, joins scholars in a discussion of Eastman's depictions of Dakota life during the 19th century.

Art Talk at 5:30 p.m.

Book Signing at 6:30 p.m.

Collector's Office

APRIL 21

BEADING BASICS

1 p.m.

Education Classroom

APRIL 28 and 29

FROM QUILLWORK TO BEADWORK

Artists from the Great Plains share the history and development of quill and beadwork through demonstrations, storytelling, and presentations of their work. Artists include Ina McNeil (Hunkpapa Lakota), Donna Shakespeare-Cummings (Arapaho), Marcus Amerman (Choctaw), and Emil Her Many Horses (Oglala Lakota). Noon – 3 p.m.

Exhibition Pause Area

FILM/VIDEO

FROM THE FOUR DIRECTIONS
Films and videos from the Great Plains Video Viewing Room, 2nd Floor Daily at 1 pm. Program is repeated on Thursdays at 5:30 pm.

JAN. 29 – FEB. 18

OUR SACRED LAND

(1984, 28 min.) Chris Spotted Eagle. A Native independent filmmaker examines the reason why many Lakota struggle to regain their sacred Black Hills.



Bigfoot Memorial Ride from the film *Wiping the Tears of Seven Generations*.

WIPING THE TEARS OF SEVEN GENERATIONS

(1991, 57 min.) Gary Rhine and Fidel Moreno. A chronicle of the 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee, told by descendants of survivors, also documents the Big Foot Memorial Ride organized by the Lakota to heal the wounds left by that event.

FEB. 19 – MARCH 11

TRANSITIONS: DESTRUCTION OF A MOTHER TONGUE

(1991, 30 min.) Darrell Kipp (Blackfoot) and Joe Fisher (Blackfoot). The important bond between Native language and culture is explored in a documentary produced by the innovative Native Voices Television Workshop in Montana.

BACKBONE OF THE WORLD: THE BLACKFEET

(1997, 57 min.) George Burdeau (Blackfoot). Turning the camera on himself, the filmmaker documents coming home to his tribe, focusing on community filmmaking and the significance of their history for today's tribal members.

MARCH 12 – APRIL 1

JOURNEY OF THE CHANDLER-POHRT COLLECTION

(1992, 17 min.) Sue Marx, Pamela Conn, and Beth Winsten. Curator George Horse Capture (Gros

Ventre) and collectors discuss the complex significance of art and artifacts obtained nearly a century ago at the Fort Belknap Reservation.

VIEWS OF A VANISHING FRONTIER

(1988, 55 min.) Craig B. Fisher for the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Native American scholars, including George Horse Capture, and other historians reconsider 19th-century paintings of Plains Indians by Swiss artist Karl Bodmer.

APRIL 2 – 29

I'D RATHER BE POWWOWING

(1983, 30 min.) George Horse Capture (Gros Ventre). A documentary follows Gros Ventre businessman Al Chandler as he participates in a weekend powwow at the Rocky Boy Reservation in Montana.

INTO THE CIRCLE: AN INTRODUCTION TO OKLAHOMA POWWOWS AND CELEBRATIONS

(1992, 58 min.) Scott Swearingen. As elders and dancers trace the history of the powwow, this production looks at the dances, regalia, and powwow etiquette.

ESPECIALLY FOR KIDS

A film and video series for all ages.

Video Viewing Room, 2nd Floor
Daily at 11 a.m. and noon

THROUGH FEB. 18

TOTEM TALK

(1997, 22 min.) Annie Frazier-Henry (Sioux-Blackfoot-French). Computer-animated clan totems put urban youth back in touch with their Northwest Coast heritage.

BENTWOOD BOX

(1985, 9 min.) Sandra Osawa (Makah). The film explores the making of a traditional Northwest Coast-style box of steamed cedar-wood, constructed by hand without using nails, screws, or glue.

BOX OF DAYLIGHT

(1990, 9 min.) Janet Fries for the Sealaska Heritage Foundation. The Naa Kahidi Theater of southeastern Alaska presents the Tlingit story of how Raven brought daylight to the world.

QUILLIG

(1992, 12 min.) Susan Avingaq, Madeline Ivalu, Mathilda Hanniliqq, Martha Maktar, Marie-H. Cousineau. Inuit videomakers portray women using an old-fashioned seal-oil lamp.

FEB. 19 – MARCH 11

FOLKLORE OF THE MUSCOGEE CREEK

(1983, 28 min.) Gary Robinson (Cherokee) for the Muscogee Creek Nation Communication Center and KOED-TV. Tales told by Oklahoma Creek elders Susannah Factor and

Woodrow Haney are illustrated by Creek artists.

RABBIT PULLS HIS WEIGHT

(1982–86, 28 min.) Eric Jordan, Paul Stephens, and Keith Leckie. *Spirit Bay* series. Young Rabbit saves the life of a bush pilot downed in the snowy woods of northern Ontario.

MARCH 12 – APRIL 1

MOOJK/CORN

(1996, 21 min.) Tito Antuñez Nuñez (Mixe). *The Mixe of Oaxaca*, Mexico farm corn, a source of their daily food and a sacred connection to Mother Earth.

HOPIT

(1984, 20 min.) Victor Masayesva Jr. (Hopi). Vivid scenes from life in the Hopi villages during four seasons.

POPOL VUH

(1989, 57 min.) Patricia Amlin. *The great Maya creation epic is told through animation adapted from ancient Maya writings and pottery.*

APRIL 2 – 29

INTO THE CIRCLE: AN INTRODUCTION TO OKLAHOMA POWWOWS AND CELEBRATIONS

(1992, 58 min.) Scott Swearingen. *As elders and dancers trace the history of the powwow, this production looks at the dances, regalia, and powwow etiquette.*

ADDRESS:

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10004

MUSEUM SHOPS:

For special-occasion shopping, jewelry by Native artists, books, and children's gifts are available in the museum shops located on the gallery and ground floor. Open daily 10 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. For information, call 212-514-3767.

WEB SITE: Have you visited the NMAI Web site?
<http://www.si.edu/nmai>



LOCATION: The NMAI Heye Center is located at One Bowling Green in lower Manhattan. Subway: 4 & 5 to Bowling Green, N & R to Whitehall Street, and 1 & 9 to South Ferry. Hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day, except December 25. Thursdays to 8 p.m., made possible by grants from the Booth Ferris Foundation. Admission to the museum and all public programs is free. To become an NMAI Charter Member, call 1-800-242-NMAI (6624).

ENVIRONMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL

In cooperation with the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

NMAI presents two nights of screenings as part of the District of Columbia's annual film festival, at the Hirshhorn's Ring Auditorium, Independence Avenue at 7th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. (Metro stop: Smithsonian). No reservations or tickets are required for these public programs, and admission is free. For more information, please call 202-342-2564. Host: Elizabeth Weatherford, head of the Film and Video Center, NMAI.

MARCH 22
8 PM – 9:30 PM

REAL INDIAN

(1996, 8 min.) Director: Malinda M. Maynor (Lumbee). *A provocative look at stereotypes and assumptions about racial categories. Introduced by the director.*

THE FLICKERING FLAME: THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF CHIEF TURKEY TAYAC

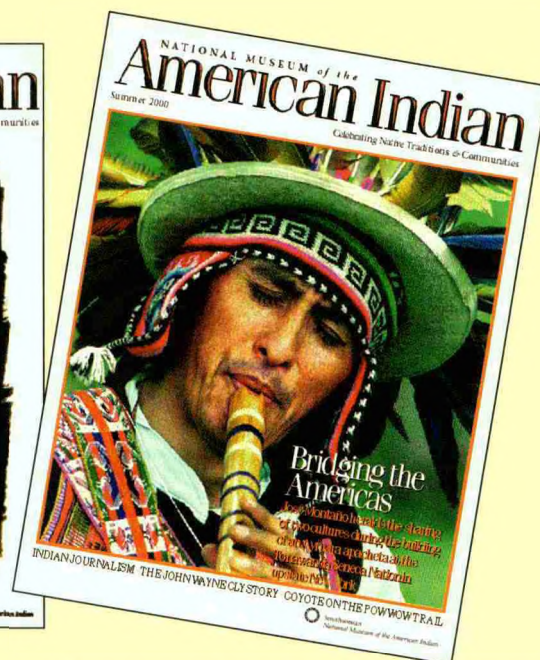
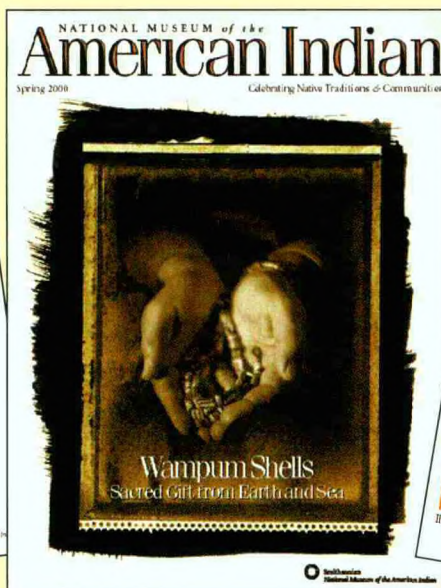
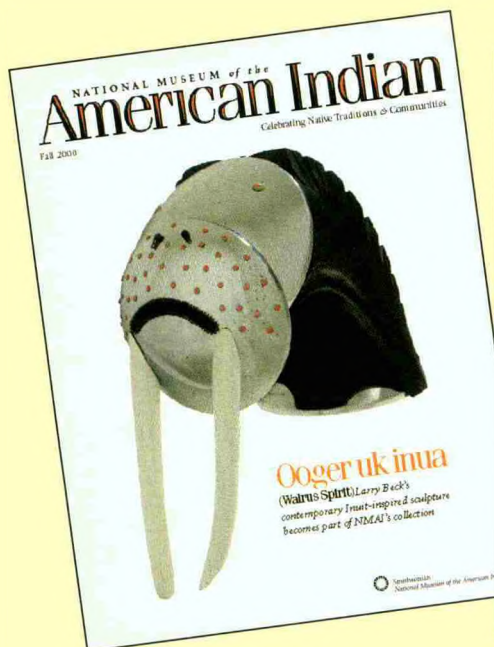
(1999, 55 min.) Directors: Janet Cavallo and Jason Corwin (Seneca). Family members recall Chief Turkey Tayac, the 27th hereditary sagamore of the Piscataway Indian Nation, who maintained links to tradition and fought for protection of an ancestral burial ground, now Maryland's Piscataway National Park. Introduced by Gabrielle Tayac (Piscataway), Public Programs Dept., NMAI. Washington, D.C., premiere.

MARCH 23
8 PM – 10:00 PM

IN THE LIGHT OF REVERENCE

(2000, 72 min.) Producer/director: Christopher McLeod. Co-producer: Malinda M. Maynor. *Native American struggles to protect lands of spiritual significance are documented in three communities: the Lakota at Devil's Tower in Wyoming, the Hopi in the Four Corners area of the Southwest, and the Wintu at Mt. Shasta in California. Introduced by the producers. Washington, D.C., premiere.*

The George Gustav Heye Center is located at One Bowling Green, New York, N.Y., and is open daily, except December 25, from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m., and, through the generosity of the Booth Ferris Foundation, Thursdays until 8 p.m. Admission is free. All programs are subject to change. For membership information, call (800) 242-NMAI. For program updates, call (212) 514-3888. Produced by NMAI, One Bowling Green, New York, N.Y. Russ Tall Chief, Calendar Editor.



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A Creek Warrior at West Point

David Moniac became a pioneer as the first "nonwhite" graduate of West Point in 1822

by DEBRA A. CRAIN

The Creek boy was only 15 years and 8 months old when he set off from his home in what is now Montgomery, Ala., to enter the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. The year was 1817. The boy was David Moniac (sometimes pronounced "Manac"), the first "nonwhite" graduate of West Point.

Moniac was under tremendous pressures at West Point. He was the only "Indian boy," as Superintendent Sylvanus Thayer referred to him. At the end of his first year, he ranked 19th out of 29 in his class, so he asked to be turned back. Cadet Moniac's request was granted, and he repeated his first year. He did not do well in academics but excelled in fencing and other physical activities. Despite his struggles, Moniac finally graduated from West Point on July 1, 1822, 39th in his class of 40.

After graduation, Moniac became a brevet second lieutenant in the 6th Infantry Regiment. He abruptly resigned his commission on Dec. 31, 1822, after President Madison suggested that excess officers retire to civilian life, where they could impart the benefits of their West Point training to the state militia.

As a civilian, Moniac became a prosperous cotton farmer and breeder of thoroughbred horses in Baldwin County, Ala. He married Mary Powell, who was the cousin of Osceola, a prominent Seminole leader. Moniac also enlisted in the state militia as a private.

In December 1835, the Second Seminole War began. Moniac returned to active military service and became a captain in the Mounted Creek Volunteers. The regiment included 750 Creek Indians, who wore white turbans to distinguish themselves from the enemy. Thirteen officers commanded the mounted regiment, including Moniac, the only American Indian officer.

Moniac led the Mounted Creek Volunteers in an attack against a strong

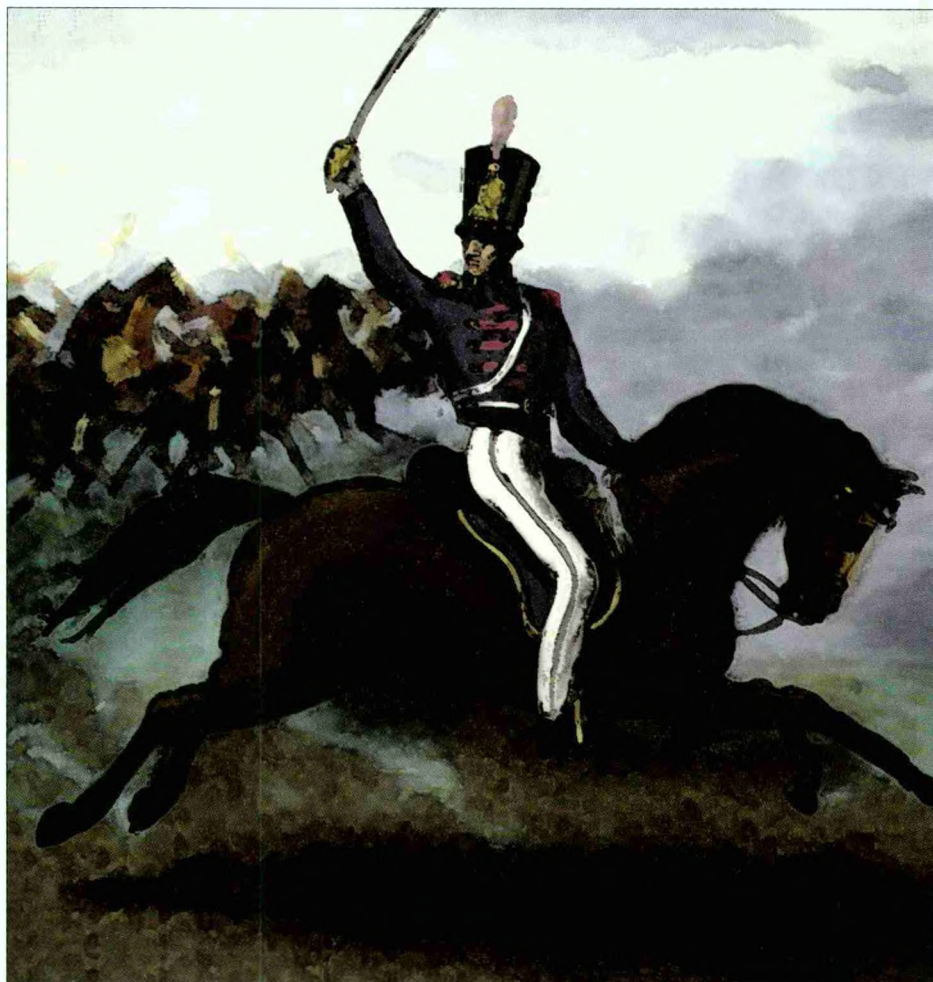


Illustration by Jeffrey Primeau

Seminole encampment at Fort Brook, Fla. (now known as Tampa), on Oct. 5, 1836. This attack must have caused some conflict, although it is not documented, between Moniac and his wife because the Seminole commander was Osceola, her cousin. Moniac was promoted to the rank of major for his action during this engagement. At dawn on Nov. 21, 1836, Moniac and his Mounted Creek Volunteers, with the Florida Militia and the Tennessee Volunteers, moved into foggy Wahoo Swamp, where the Seminoles were massed in considerable force. Moniac and the three regiments fought their way to the Withlacoohee River, and Moniac was ordered to sound the depth of the water. When he entered the icy river on that fateful day, the Seminoles fired a deadly

volley of musket fire, piercing his body with 67 bullets and mortally wounding him.

On Jan. 15, 1837, near what is now the Florida National Cemetery at Bushnell, David Moniac was laid to rest with full military honors. His pallbearers were officers who had been his classmates at West Point. A plaque commemorating Moniac's life stands as a tribute in the old Cadet Chapel on the grounds of the West Point Cemetery.

Out of the 57,550 graduates of the U.S. Military Academy since the first graduating class in 1802 to the class of 2000, 92 have been reported American Indian graduates. ■

Debra A. Crain (Blackfoot) is a freelance writer whose husband and son are both West Point graduates.



We Must Retrace Our Steps

Reclamation of our languages will take the patience and determination of our grandmothers

by Beverly Singer

Many weekends I drive north from work in Albuquerque to my home at Santa Clara Pueblo. As Santa Fe approaches, I look west toward the Jemez Mountains, better known as the Rockies. Slightly north is Tsikummu, the beloved peak of the Tewa-speaking people in the pueblos of San Juan, Santa Clara, San Ildefonso, Nambe, Pojoaque, and Tesuque. We make an annual pilgrimage to the mountain to offer our prayers to the ancestral spirits there, asking for guidance and strength as they keep watch over our villages.

A billboard with a casino showgirl in a skimpy sequined costume with a pink faux-flamingo feather headdress makes me half-smile. The ad belies the image of my great-grandmother Dominiquita Naranjo and her contemporaries, who in public wore shawls covering their heads and bodies, a good sun block but, above all, a custom meant to display their modesty. Dominiquita cared for my younger brother and me after school until our parents finished work. My great-grandmother spoke only Tewa to us. But just as my great-grandmother taught us to remember her language, school taught us to forget it.

In 1961, I was seven years old and enrolled at the Santa Clara Pueblo Day School. When two of my classmates spoke Tewa within earshot of a teacher, the principal washed their mouths out with soap. A long silence prevailed in our classroom adjacent to the boys' bathroom as my classmates and I listened. It was years before I came to realize that the best revenge is forgiveness. For my great-grandmother's generation, forgiveness was practiced by being kind, resilient, and willing to set things right when the opportunity presented itself. For me an opportunity came in 1990 when I began producing videos about the wellness movement in Native America. Through interviews with Indians in the U.S. whose experiences paralleled my own, the losses we suffered became opportunities to prevent further cultural loss.

In 1998, I produced a video about diabetes in cooperation with the Center for American Indian Research and Education in Berkeley, Calif. Lorelei DeCora, a public health nurse from the Winnebago tribe of Nebraska who is featured in the video, says finding the medicine

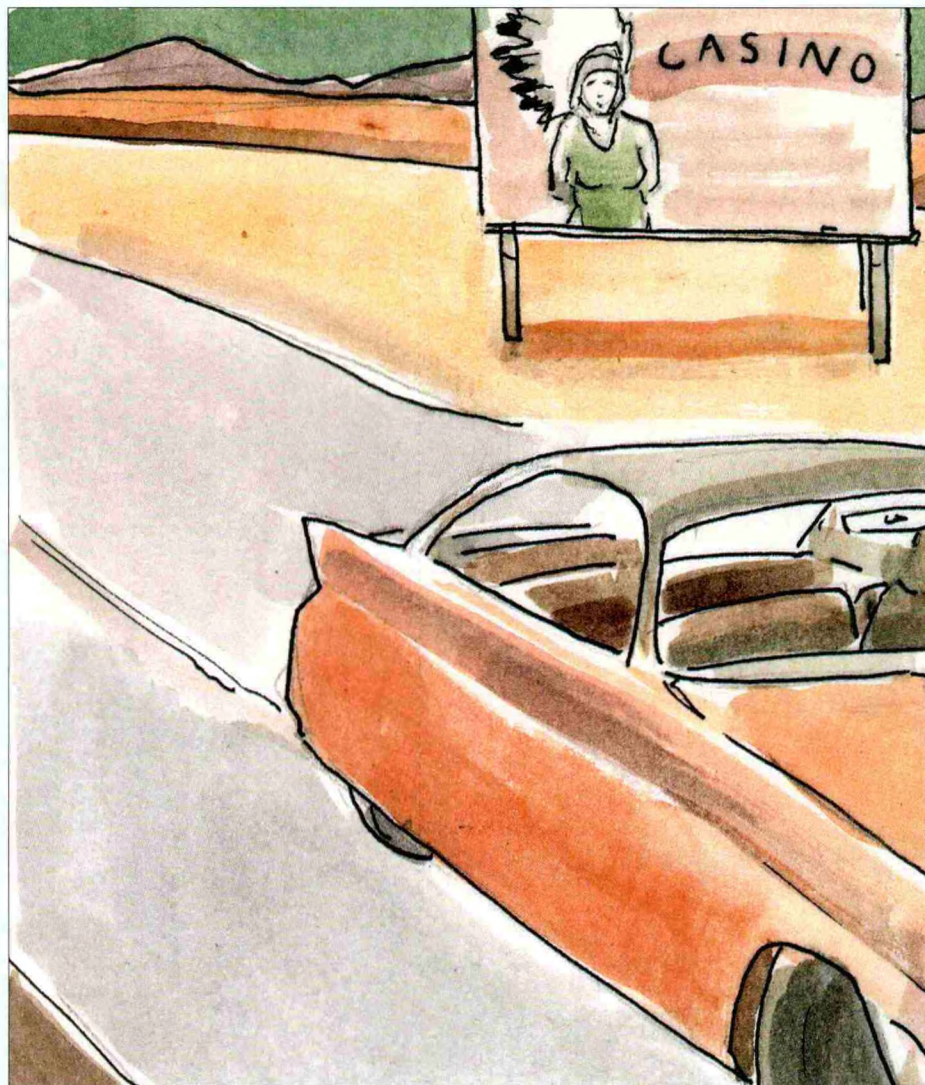


Illustration by Travis Shilling

for diabetes and all diseases affecting Native people "must take place at every level of our physical, emotional, and spiritual selves." Thinking of DeCora reminds me, as I cross the bridge over the Rio Grande River, that being Tewa means we must also find the medicine to keep Native languages alive. For me, hearing conversations in Tewa is a blessing of images of the land, sounds I associate exclusively with my community, such as our feast day dances. This language connects us with our ancestors through a sacred alliance of shared understanding about the world we inhabit. It is the basis upon which our ceremonial life depends, for the rituals associated with ceremonies are repeated with the cyclical intention of ensuring the survival of the community.

Thus I am determined to use Tewa, which I understand fully but do not speak fluently. My

parents were fluent Tewa speakers but chose to use English at home, hoping it would improve opportunities for me and my siblings. In hindsight, I wish my parents had spoken Tewa to me so that I could help teach the language to children of my pueblo, whose right it is to know their cultural inheritance. An awareness project on video about preserving and revitalizing our language is something that I, at least, can contribute. Thank you. *Kunda.* ■

Dr. Beverly R. Singer (Tewa) is director of the Alfonso Ortiz Center for Intercultural Studies at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, and teaches indigenous media in the department of anthropology. For further information about language revitalization efforts, contact the Indigenous Language Institute in Santa Fe, N.M. at 505-820-0311.

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