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April 26, 2014

Fact Sheet for Tipi Presentation from the Cowboy and Indian Alliance

The tipi is a gift to the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) from the Native Nations' Leaders with the Cowboy and Indian Alliance. A spiritual object of historical importance, the tipi represents their hopes for protected land and clean water.

The title of the tipi is, "Oyate Owicakiye Wicasa /Awe Kooda Bilaxpak Kuuxshish," which are the two names given to President Obama by the Lakota and the Crow Nations upon his visit to those Nations in 2008.

The title translates from the Lakota and Crow languages, respectively, as "Man Who Helps the People" and "One Who Helps People throughout the Land."

Oyate Wahacanka Woecun, a community of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe of South Dakota, provided the theme and narrative for the tipi.

"Oyate Owicakiye Wicasa /Awe Kooda Bilaxpak Kuuxshish," is presented to the museum by:

Bryan Brewer, President of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation;

Tom Poor Bear, Vice President of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation;

Cyril Scott, President of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Upper Brule Sioux Nation;

Phyllis Young, At Large, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Dakota and Lakota Nations;

in attendance with:

Chief Reuben George, Tsleil-Waututh First Nation, British Columbia;

Robin Lebeau, Council Representative, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Lakota Nation;

Justin Song Hawk, Councilman, Yankton Sioux Nation;

and received by the museum's curators and historian:

Emil Her Many Horses, Oglala Lakota Nation, NMAI Associate Curator;

Dr. Gabrielle Tayac, Piscataway Indian Nation, NMAI Historian;

Joe D. Horse Capture, A'aninin (Gros Ventre) Indian Nation, NMAI Associate Curator;

Sharyl Pahe, Navajo Nation/San Carlos Apache, NMAI Interpretive Services Manager.

Steve Tamayo, a distinguished traditional Sicangu Lakota artist, whose family is originally from Milk's Camp community on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota, designed and painted the tipi. (See bio attached.)

The images on the tipi are:

Water = Blue line around the base. Representing the Ogallala Aquifer and it is also the foundation that unites all living beings.

Earth = Green line around the base. This represents the land and the second foundational element that unifies us.

Cedar Tree up the spine of the tipi = The roots of the tree represent Oceti Sakowin (Seven Council Fires). The cedar tree was the first tree created and has a relationship to the Thunder Beings. The Thunders represent balance and protection. In the trunk of the tree is a large turtle with its shell representing the earth and also represents the connection and responsibility we have to the entire world. The cedar tree is always green and represents long life. The long life is for our future generations, the earth, the water and for the Cowboy and Indian Alliance.

The horses running toward the opening of the tipi signify the unification of the alliance. The painted horses represent sovereign Native Nations; the solid-colored horses represent the States' Farmers and Ranchers. Images on the horses depict regions and affiliations.

The top of the tipi is black signifying the night sky and the stars of the Big Dipper that are placed there represent our Ancestors. The stars are also significant because they provide direction and even in the dark of night, they are consistent.

The tipi was first blessed on the Ponca Trail of Tears in Neligh, Nebraska, on the land of Art and Helen Tanderup. The land could be crossed by the Keystone XL pipeline. A spirit camp was held in November, 2013, with the unpainted tipi with the Ponca Nation, Yankton Sioux Nation and Rosebud Sioux Nation along with allied citizen group Bold Nebraska. The tipi was blessed again on the same land in early April, 2014, after the Cowboy and Indian Alliance used a tractor to create an image of a Cowboy and an Indian Warrior with a symbol of water under both of them. The tipi was blessed for the last time before gifting to the museum at the Cowboy and Indian Alliance's event called Reject and Protect to symbolize the farmers, ranchers and tribal communities' shared love for the land and water.

The liner of the tipi, also gifted to the museum as part of the historical record, is marked by the palm and thumb prints of "the people, standing together to protect the land and the water." Their message to the President being, "Leave your mark on history, as we leave our marks on this tipi."



Steve Tamayo is a traditional Sicangu Lakota Artist whose family is originally from Milk's Camp community on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota. After graduating from Thomas Jefferson High School in Council Bluffs in 1984, he enlisted in the U.S. Army where he was part of the 101st Airborne Division, stationed out of Ft. Campbell in Kentucky. Upon returning to the metro area in 1987 Tamayo learned the traditional arts of the Umonhon people under the instruction of Howard Wolf. This relationship instilled in Tamayo a deep appreciation and knowledge of Umonhon language, culture, and history. Tamayo learned from Wolf the importance of traditional

materials, construction, and the history surrounding Native artifacts and Powwow regalia. In 2000, Tamayo moved his family to the Rosebud Reservation where he further developed his understanding of Northern Plains Indian Art. As he earned his BFA in Fine Arts from Sinté Gleska University, he also developed and taught a curriculum of Traditional Arts for their Lakota Studies Department. Currently, he leads study and service groups on the Reservation and travels to museums and colleges throughout the country, including the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) where he has worked closely with the collections management and conservation teams helping to identify historic methods of artifact construction and how best to preserve the material culture of the Indian People. His most recent work with the NMAI is the current exhibition entitled "As We Grow," centered on traditional Native games and toys. He is currently an artist-in-residence and cultural consultant at Omaha Public Schools and will teach a course in Native American Art History at Metropolitan Community College in the spring quarter.

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