

**STATUS OF THE COMPLETION OF THE NATIONAL
MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

**OVERSIGHT HEARING ON STATUS OF THE COMPLETION OF THE
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN**

**MARCH 3, 2004
WASHINGTON, DC**



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**STATUS OF THE COMPLETION OF THE
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN
INDIAN**

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3, 2004

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to other business, at 10:15 a.m. in room 485, Senate Russell Building, Hon. Ben Nighthorse Campbell (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Campbell, Inouye, and Murkowski.

STATEMENT OF HON. BEN NIGHTHORSE CAMPBELL, U.S. SENATOR FROM COLORADO, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

The CHAIRMAN. We will now turn to the oversight hearing on the status of the National Museum of the American Indian, which will be part of our Nation's Smithsonian Institutions. This morning, the committee will hear from Rick West, who over the past 14 years has done a magnificent job, in my opinion, as the first director of this museum; and Jackie Johnson, executive director of the National Congress of American Indians.

It is my understanding that the NCAI is working with the museum on its celebrations surrounding the September opening of the museum. We will be looking forward to hearing of the events that are scheduled, too.

While in the House, I had the honor of working on this bill. Senator Inouye was the Senate sponsor, and virtually everyone knows that without his support and help, there simply would not be a big beautiful building out there on the Mall. It would still be just a flat piece of grass. I was on the House side at that time and was given the honor to carry it on the House side, so we have been colleagues in all of the years that have passed, not only in getting it built, but raising the money and doing all the things that have to be done to make sure that that is going to actually open on time.

So on September 21, the NMAI will open its doors in a week-long celebration leading millions of visitors to the location on the National Mall. This beautiful building will include 800,000 objects drawn from indigenous cultures spanning the entire western hemisphere from the Arctic Circle of North America to the Tierra del Fuego on the tip of South America.

The fiscal year 2005 budget request, while not perfect, does include continued funding for the museum and we will hear from Rick West about some of the details of the budget this morning.

I know you have some time limitations. I understand, Rick, so with that I will just turn to Senator Inouye for his comments and we will proceed.

Senator INOUE. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I have a longer statement. I would like to ask permission to have it included in the record.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection, it will be included in the record.

STATEMENT OF HON. DANIEL K. INOUE, U.S. SENATOR FROM HAWAII, VICE CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

Senator INOUE. The journey that has led us here today has been a long one. It began 17 years ago in February 1987 when this committee held a hearing on a bill that was the precursor of the Native American Graves, Protection and Repatriation Act. At that hearing, the Secretary of the Smithsonian testified that our great national museum was in possession of over 18,500 human remains of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. To say that I was horrified would be an understatement.

That testimony served as the impetus to establish a memorial on the National Mall that might serve as a final resting place for those remains that could not be identified as being associated with a particular tribe, Native community, or family and thus returned.

Not long thereafter, I was invited to tour the Museum of the American Indian Heye Foundation in New York. It was there I first saw the vast collection of Native art and artifacts gathered from Native communities in North, Central, and South America, and the idea of establishing not only a memorial, but a national museum to honor the contributions of Native peoples was born.

Although, Mr. Chairman, I have to leave to participate in a hearing of the Defense Appropriations Committee, I want to take this time to join you in commending the director of the National Museum, Rick West, for all that he has done to shepherd the evolution of this museum from vision to reality. On September 21, as you have noted, we will celebrate the opening of this museum. I am told that there will be a grand procession of Native peoples from all the Americas, proceeding from the Washington Monument to the base of the Capitol and then to the National Museum, the building that will forever stand as a symbol of the magnificence of the Native peoples of America, the first Americans.

It will also remind us that there was a time of deceit and destruction and death and massacre. But today, it will be a shrine to the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Prepared statement of Sen. Inouye appears in appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you for your eloquent statement, Senator Inouye.

Rick, why don't you go ahead and proceed please.

**STATEMENT OF RICK WEST, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL MUSEUM
OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN**

Mr. WEST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, Senator Inouye, and members of the committee, I am pleased and honored to be with you today to mark an occasion of great importance to the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian, the tens of millions of Native people throughout the Americas, to the citizens of this great Nation, namely the day on which after 1 decade of planning, development and construction, we will open the Mall museum.

As the founding director of the National Museum of the American Indian, I would like to thank the Congress of the United States for your unceasing support since 1989 when our authorizing legislation was passed. It has been a long journey and now it is time to celebrate.

Over the years, we have opened two facilities, the George Gustav Heye Center in New York, the Cultural Resources Center in Suitland, MD, and now we will finish with the Mall museum on the last available site on this essential corridor of this great Nation.

The Mall building comes from the heart and soul of Indian country. In the early stages of design, we conducted numerous consultations to learn more about what this building should look and feel like. You will experience that when you enter on the east side of the building. No person has described better what the Smithsonian's 21st century National Museum of the American Indian is all about. Tens of thousands of years of Native culture, experience, history, and worthiness are redeemed by this Native place that sits in the heart of the Nation. Through that redemption, the museum creates an unprecedented and remarkable opportunity for mutual understanding and cultural reconciliation that provides a marker for the ages.

Let me take you on a short tour of what the visitor will see as they enter this magnificent structure. The visitor's first introduction to this Native place will occur as he or she steps onto the very site itself. Far beyond conventional notions of landscape architecture, the eco-environment that surrounds the building will mark it as a different destination. Greeted by "Grandfather rocks," walking beside a tumbling stream from the time they enter the site until they reach the building entrance on the east, passing by hundreds of plantings, carefully selected to evoke that site in all its pre-contact natural wonder. Visitors will pass through a generous and welcoming portal to the building itself.

Inside and once past the interior welcoming areas, they will find themselves in the captivating and perhaps defining space of the museum, the Potomac. This atrium which soars some five museum stories high, the full height of the building, welcomes and even encourages through its ample windows visual connections between the building and its environmental surround. It is a central gathering space for the building, the home for varied public programs of dance, music, other performance art and demonstrations that confirm not only the deep, rich and varied cultural past of Native peoples of the Americas, but also and as important, their cultural con-

temporaneousness as cultural phenomena of the present, and not just the past.

Now I would like to briefly share what we are planning for the opening week itself. On the morning of September 21, 2004, we will begin an all-Native procession starting at 8 a.m. and ending at 12 noon, as thousands of Native peoples, along with some of our very best non-Native friends, many of the Native people in their resplendent regalia that marks their communities, move together in procession down the National Mall.

Beginning at the Smithsonian's key icon, the Castle, to a ceremonial place of commemoration and dedication located at the foot of the Capitol Building just across the street from the museum itself. Following a brief opening ceremony, and I personally promise that it will be that, the thousands of well-wishers and celebrants, Native and non-Native alike, will proceed to the museum itself.

In addition to the procession and the opening, we are planning the First Americans Festival on the National Mall for an entire week following September 21, 2004 to expand and enhance further our visitors' knowledge and views of Native America past and present. A memorable combination of music, dance, song, theater, symposia, and seminars, the festival will sit physically on the National Mall between the Capitol Building of the Nation on the east and the Washington Monument on the west, surely, a most remarkable and welcoming act of cultural sharing by those who were here with those who came. We have invited over 150 participants hemispherically represented to the festival, so it should be an extremely rich experience indeed.

We expect broad media coverage for opening day. It will be webcast on the radio both national and international, as well as on PBS. We also plan to include jumbo-trons along the Mall as well, so that all of our tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of visitors can share in this experience.

This concludes my statement. Now I would like to introduce Jackie Johnson, NCAI executive director, who will talk about the unique partnership we will share for the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Prepared statement of Mr. West appears in appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Jackie, will you proceed?

**STATEMENT OF JACKIE JOHNSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS**

Ms. JOHNSON. Thank you. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice Chairman, and members of the committee. I just would like to followup with some of the things that Rick said, but clearly, and I have a statement which I know that you will enter for the record.

The CHAIRMAN. It will be included in the record.

Ms. JOHNSON. I just want to summarize for you, because I am very excited about this opening.

The CHAIRMAN. We can tell. You are in a very good mood.

Ms. JOHNSON. I am. I am in a really good mood. [Laughter.]

I am feeling better in the last 2 days. But anyway, I am very excited about this opening and what an opportunity this is for Native Americans of this country and the Western Hemisphere. It is a

great opportunity for us and we as tribal leaders in this country have gathered. We have recognized that this is a tremendous opportunity for us to educate the public at large about who we are and who we are today, where we have come, and the contributions that we have made to this great country.

We recognize this partnership and being able to work with the museum has been a very educational process for all of us. I just might even mention that in my years before coming here, I got to be part of the design team for the Cultural Resource Center. The whole environment of this development was so culturally significant and sensitive to the environment of our communities, the traditions that are important to us. That kind of work as we move forward, I know that the millions of people who are touched not just by going to the museum, but participating in the development of the museum have learned a lot and have grown a lot about our culture and our traditions. So I wanted to thank Rick and his team for that.

NCAI's role is really to be an adviser, to help with outreach and information, making sure that everyone has all the information that is going to be happening, and encouraging folks to get involved early on, make their reservations, and be a participant.

In addition to the Folk Life Festival that they will be having in the museum after the procession, NCAI will be cosponsoring with the American Indian Society as part of the opening a cultural ceremony, which is a social dance where tribes can feel very comfortable in addition to the structured environment, an open environment so everybody can engage as they choose to.

In addition to that, we are trying to make sure that we do the public education with this heightened media attention. So we have had some initial conversations with members of your staff on the committee on having a number of educational forums here on the Hill to deal with a few of the significant issues.

In addition to that, we will be having at the National Press Club on Wednesday and Thursday at noon two forums. The first forum is going to be focused on our past, our heritage and what do we contribute to the country. The second forum is going to be on our contemporary selves and as tribal governments, who are we today.

In addition to that, there are a number of other tribal groups who want to sponsor or participate in other events. We have asked that day to work through and in conjunction with us at NCAI and the museum, so that we can make sure that everybody knows about the events that are being planned, and that there will not be any significant overlaps that would cause somewhat of a scheduling frustration on those pieces.

I think that most of all, we are looking at this. We have been working with the National Geographic and other groups who are also going to be highlighting. In fact, National Geographic is going to have a special publication that month just on Native Americans, and has been working with the museum. We have been advising them also on some technical aspects, as well as some other public broadcasting systems.

So that is really what we would like to encourage, is this collaborative effort. We would love to work with your committee. I think that this would be a prime opportunity to have a significant event,

even a rally at some point, that really promotes the positive benefits of opening the museum, and we want to have a positive image of Indian Country, but still deal with the reality of our current issues in this environment.

Thank you.

[Prepared statement of Ms. Johnson appears in appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Thanks for that very positive presentation. Thank you for commending Rick West. He is Cheyenne, you know. I thought I might put that in the record. [Laughter.]

Ms. JOHNSON. I thought there was some relationship.

The CHAIRMAN. I never let a chance go by without pointing that out.

Well, let me ask a couple of questions and I will turn to Senator Murkowski. By the way, my new buckskins just came in last week.

Mr. WEST. Did they? You are a couple of steps ahead of me, then, I think. Mine are coming.

The CHAIRMAN. September is going to be hot, but you better get yours out there anyway.

Do you have a round figure like you expect in the first year to attend this new museum?

Mr. WEST. Yes, Mr. Chairman; the projected figures for visitation range between 4 million and 6 million visitors per year. Now, actually because of the size of the building, even fully loaded, which is to say 16,000 people per day, that really computes to about 4 million per year. So we have found it necessary to go to a ticketing system for the museum, and that will of course be in place when it opens, too. But the visitorship will be very high. We sit right next to the most visited museum in the world, the National Air and Space Museum, and directly across from another of the most visited museums in the world, the East Wing of the National Gallery.

The CHAIRMAN. You mentioned the first day there will probably be thousands of people there. How are you going to determine who gets in that first day, when that huge procession is there?

Mr. WEST. Well, we have already put information on our website, and that information, and let me just be very clear about those websites. First of all, the information generally about the opening is at www.americanindian.si.edu. As far as getting tickets for the opening, we have already indicated through the website that they can become available online, and that is www.tickets.com.

The CHAIRMAN. That is on a first come, first serve basis?

Mr. WEST. It is. And we, of course, are holding back a certain number of tickets.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes; will those tickets cost money?

Mr. WEST. For the tickets that are actually ordered online, there is a small fee. It is not a cost of the ticket itself, it is a handling charge. If the tickets are gotten at the museum itself, there is no charge. People can also call 1-866-400-6624 and get tickets through that telephone line also.

The CHAIRMAN. It is my understanding that most of the hotels in town have already been booked. Is that your understanding, too? Have you heard that?

Mr. WEST. The hotels are filling up. As I understand it, there is also another major convention that is going to be here during that period. That, of course, has compounded the hotel issues.

The CHAIRMAN. What was that a convention?

Mr. WEST. I think it is the Postal Service.

Ms. JOHNSON. Yes; the post office is having their convention.

One of the things we have encouraged the tribes to do, in addition to all the folks getting their conference hotels now, many of the tribes that I have talked to are looking toward outside of just the Washington, DC area and they are getting charter buses to bring them in and out of Virginia, and trying to make this into a larger event.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I support the Postal Service, but we were here first. [Laughter.]

We did get a couple of calls from people upset that they could not ride their horses in the procession. The Park Service apparently has said no to that.

Mr. WEST. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Or did the museum say no to that?

Mr. WEST. We both did. Let me explain exactly why we did that. There are two reasons. First, is a human safety consideration. We expect anywhere between 5,000 and 30,000 people in the procession itself.

The CHAIRMAN. Children too?

Mr. WEST. Children, too, old people, people who cannot move quickly getting out of the way of 1,500 pound animals. So we wanted to avoid any risk in that way.

The other thing I would say, and I say this speaking as a good Cheyenne and a Plains Indian myself, I did not want to be too hyper-ethnocentric from the Plains Indian standpoint. The fact is that there are many Native people from Latin America who will be joining us who would love to have brought their llamas. We did not permit that because they are animals that can create difficulties, too. So we just wanted to kind of even the playing field, if you will. I have heard from a couple of our good friends in Indian country out in the Plains country about this, but that is the position that has been taken by both the museum and the Park Service. We will explain that more fully on the Web site at a certain point in time.

The CHAIRMAN. They will still have a great time.

Senator Inouye alluded to the remains problem we have had years ago. In the authorizing bill, I remember it was one of the things I worked on that required the Smithsonian to start the process of returning skeletal remains to tribes. The old macabre joke among Indian country was there are more dead Indians in Washington than live ones for a long time before we passed that legislation. What is the number that the Smithsonian has finally reinterred so far or returned to tribes?

Mr. WEST. I can certainly speak for the National Museum of the American Indian. We had when we finally completed the inventories, about 500 human remains. Those are not full sets of human remains, but that includes something like the digital part of a finger. The vast majority of those remains have been deaccessioned already and are on their way to being returned.

We originally had hoped to wrap up the return of human remains by the time we opened the Mall building. We will probably fall slightly short of that, but it is in process and is well along the way. I cannot speak definitively for the National Museum of Natu-

ral History, our sister institution at the Smithsonian, but I do know that at least by last count, they had returned some 4,000 to 5,000 of the 18,000 human remains that they had initially. They also have made considerable progress. They had many more to contend with than the National Museum of the American Indian.

The CHAIRMAN. I understand some are so ancient that nobody can track where they came from.

Mr. WEST. That is one of the difficulties.

The CHAIRMAN. Sure.

Senator Murkowski, did you have some questions of Mr. West or Jackie?

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you and welcome. I, too, appreciate the enthusiasm with which you reported to the committee this morning.

Mr. WEST. Thank you, Senator.

Senator MURKOWSKI. It is going to be a very exciting event and we are looking forward to it. I have to assume from your comments that dog teams are also not welcome. [Laughter.]

Mr. WEST. Reluctantly so, Senator.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Okay. Just in case we had any inquiries, I don't think we had.

Mr. WEST. Okay.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Just a couple of very brief questions. In Alaska just recently, on February 16, we celebrated or observed Elizabeth Peratrovich Day which is in honor of Tlingit woman who really inspired I believe it was one of our Nation's first anti-discrimination laws, a very inspirational and motivational person in Alaska's history. I am wondering if the museum is planning on addressing the civil rights struggle of our first Americans and whether you would consider including Elizabeth Peratrovich's contribution to the achievement of equal rights for our first peoples.

Mr. WEST. She certainly made, as you point out, significant contributions to arguing for the civil rights of the first citizens of this hemisphere. We recognize this and I am well aware of her contribution in this specific regard.

As far as what the museum itself is doing as of opening day, there are various parts of the three inaugural permanent installations, the exhibitions that speak to the very issues that you are talking about. One of the exhibits in particular, which I think addresses these kinds of concerns and what has happened as a matter of history and for that matter, as a matter of the present, because some of these issues continue, as you know, is the exhibit "Our Peoples," which is one of those three inaugural exhibitions.

This is an effort on the part of the museum and our Native community collaborators to address some of those questions of Native history as told from a Native standpoint. In the course of that discussion, setting up that dialog, a number of the very kinds of civil rights questions come up that you were referring to. They are an important part, I think, of the Native community historical experience and I think that they need to be addressed respectfully and head-on. We plan to do that.

We also want to show through our presentations of the contemporary life of Native peoples, how we have continued to address those issues as the very person you are talking about did so suc-

cessfully in her own efforts. I would think that in the course of discussions the surround those kinds of installations and programs at the National Museum of the American Indian there will be ample opportunity to discuss the specific example that you raise.

Senator MURKOWSKI. We will look forward to that.

I do not know whether this is something that is already in the works, but Alaska and Washington, DC are a long ways apart and I am reminded of that every week as I come back to work. Understanding that we would like to get as many of our Alaskans to the new museum as possible to view it, but the reality is such that you will not be able to. Will there be any interactive way that Alaskan can see what is going on in the museum without actually having to come to Washington, DC?

Mr. WEST. Absolutely there will be. It brings me to that component of the National Museum of the American Indian that probably is the component that brought me here in the first place. Had I not been confident that the National Museum of the American Indian would be able to introduce these kinds of connections that you refer to, I do not think I would be sitting here right now.

That is that part of the museum that we have referred to historically as the fourth museum of the National Museum of the American Indian. "Fourth" because we are talking about it in addition to the three physical facilities that we have, one in New York and two here in Washington, DC. I realized exactly what you say, which is to say that only a small fraction of the Native peoples of the United States, let alone this hemisphere, will ever set foot in any of our magnificent facilities in New York or in Washington, DC. So we had to figure out ways to bring the museum to them where they are, rather than expecting them to come to the museum.

That is what the fourth museum is all about. It is really a collective of programs, if you will, of the National Museum of the American Indian. Let me describe it just briefly so that you have a picture of it. Some of the ways of reaching out are purely conventional as far as museum practice goes, loaning objects, traveling exhibitions. But some of them take advantage of 21st century technology, such as the Internet and virtual connections.

We have actually already experimented with those in connection with Alaska in particular, because that is probably as far as the United goes, the most remote location for Native peoples. What we did was in connection with an exhibition, which we had gotten from the Anchorage Museum of Art and History, which was the Y'upik mask show, and I remember your husband was up there to see that show, not your husband, Senator Murkowski, the first Senator Murkowski was up there. We were able at that time to establish through our website a linkage between a number of Y'upik elders who were actually visiting that show and school children in Alaska. It was interactive and in real time.

That, I think, bespeaks the potential for this kind of connection, which is to say it is a way of bringing the resources of the National Museum of the American Indian to Native communities. The reason that we believe that is so important is because we understand at the NMAI that Native cultures are maintained and sustained

and protected at the community level, not here in Washington, DC or New York.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Great. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Maybe one last question, or maybe two. There is a support group that people can pay a nominal fee, whatever it is, \$10 a month or something like that, and belong to a support group for the NMAI, isn't there?

Mr. WEST. There is a membership.

The CHAIRMAN. Membership, okay.

Mr. WEST. We have a membership program.

The CHAIRMAN. Right. How many members are in that now?

Mr. WEST. We have well over 50,000 members in that program now, and it is by some margin the largest membership program of any museum at the Smithsonian Institution, and has been very successful. Through that program, some 250,000 Americans, and even some of those beyond our borders, have participated in supporting the National Museum of the American Indian. From the membership program alone, we have netted some \$15 million to \$20 million that went to the construction fund, which helped build the building on the National Mall. So it is a very important component of our efforts, which we realize we must always pursue to raise private funds to supplement and amplify those appropriations that we get from the Congress.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes.

Yes; Jackie.

Ms. JOHNSON. Could I add to that just for 1 second. If you go to the website to order your tickets, you can also join your membership right there for \$100. We are really encouraging folks when they order their tickets to also join that membership.

The CHAIRMAN. The largest single donor was still the Pequots.

Mr. WEST. There are three who are tied for that honor. They were the first of the largest single donors.

The CHAIRMAN. Who were the three?

Mr. WEST. The three tribes are pledged \$10 million to the National Museum of the American Indian: the Mashentucket Pequots, as you point out, were the first; the Mohegans of Connecticut were the second; and the Oneidas in New York were the third.

The CHAIRMAN. That is wonderful.

Thank you. I have no further questions. If there are any further ones from the committee, we may send them in and have them answered in writing.

Mr. WEST. That is fine. We will be happy to submit anything.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you for appearing today. We will keep the record open for 2 weeks if there are any further comments.

The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:35 a.m. the committee was adjourned, to reconvene at the call of the Chair.]

APPENDIX

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

STATEMENT OF HON. DANIEL K. INOUE, U.S. SENATOR FROM HAWAII, VICE
CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. Chairman, I have a prepared statement that I would like to have included in the record, but in the interest of time, I would like to say just a few words this morning.

The journey that has led us here today has been a long one—it began 17 years ago in February 1987, when this committee held a hearing on a bill that was the precursor to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

At that hearing, the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution testified that our great national museum was in possession of over 18,500 human remains of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.

That testimony served as the impetus to establish a memorial on the National Mall that might serve as a final resting place for those remains that could not be identified as being associated with a particular tribe or Native community, and thus returned.

Not long thereafter, I was invited to tour the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, in New York, and it was there I first saw the vast collection of Native art and artifacts gathered from Native communities in North, Central and South America, and the idea of establishing not only a memorial but a national museum to honor the contributions of the Native peoples of this continent was borne.

Although I have to leave to participate in a hearing of the Defense appropriations subcommittee, I wanted to take this time today to commend the Director of the National Museum of the American Indian, Rick West, for all that he has done to shepherd the evolution of this museum from vision to reality.

On September 21, 2004, we will celebrate the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian. I am told that there will be a grand procession of Native peoples from all of the Americas—proceeding from the Washington Monument to the base of the Capitol, and then to the National Museum of the American Indian—the building that will forever stand as a symbol of the magnificence of the Native peoples of the Americas—the First Americans.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JACQUELINE JOHNSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL
CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

Gunalcheesh. Good morning Chairman Campbell, Vice Chairman Inouye, and distinguished Committee Members. My name is Jacqueline Johnson, and I serve as the Executive Director of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI). On behalf of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) and its more than 250-member tribal nations, I am pleased to have the opportunity to present testimony on the completion of the National Museum of the American Indian. Thank you for affording me the opportunity to represent our member nations and express our tremendous excitement as the Museum nears completion.

As the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments, NCAI is very proud to be able to work with the Museum on this historical event that will impact not only Indian Country, but the public at large who will be afforded the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the rich cultural fabric of this Nation's native people through the NMAI's exhibits and programs. We offer our deepest thanks to this committee for its instrumental role in bringing this important effort to fruition.

NCAI has had the honor of working closely with the staff of the Museum. The member tribes of NCAI and the NCAI Executive Board are very excited about the opportunity the Museum will present to broaden public understanding of the influence American Indian and Alaska Native cultures have on our Nation as a whole, and the continuum of cultures that continue to thrive in contemporary Native America.

NCAI is looking forward to the week of the opening, and we have worked in conjunction with the staff of the NMAI to do consultation and outreach to all tribal governments. NCAI has hosted open working sessions during our Annual and Executive Council meetings to ensure that tribes are informed about the activities planned and are able to provide their ideas and input. We plan to hold another informational session at our Mid-Year meeting this June in Uncasville, CN at the Mohegan Sun facilities. NCAI has met with the NMAI staff throughout the past 2 years to provide input in the planning process for the opening events, and sits, on the Steering Committee that is supervising all of the activities being planned for this momentous occasion.

In advance of the grand opening, NCAI will be hosting several educational forums at the National Press Club and other venues in Washington, DC to raise the awareness of the general public about the contributions American Indians and Alaska Natives have made to this country, as well as to educate the public on the issues facing tribes today. Specifically, the first forum will focus on our past history and our contributions to this country and the second forum will discuss our contemporary issues and our identity as tribal governments in this country. We feel it is important for the general public to see the reality of tribal nations as the thriving governments and successful communities with flourishing cultures and traditions—not just in the light of romanticized notions of Indians from movies or books. NCAI has also been advising the National Geographic as they prepare a special edition of their publication in anticipation of the opening of the Museum. NCAI supports the opening of the Museum and their efforts to celebrate the vibrancy and longevity of over 560 distinct and beautiful Native cultures as well as the Museum's intentions to dispel the stereotypical images of a single pan-Native culture.

During the week of the Grand Opening, NCAI and the American Indian Society will be hosting a cultural exchange for all of the tribal groups that will be in town. This cultural exchange will include sharing of tribal dances, songs, and other traditions by Native people. NCAI is working to get the word out about NMAI opening events to ensure that all tribes have the opportunity to celebrate this historic opening. Since there are so many requests from groups wanting to do events around this country, NCAI is requesting that organizations and groups notify us of the planned activity so we may add it to our national calendar and prevent overlapping of activities when possible.

In addition, NCAI will host several forums and briefings on Capitol Hill related to the legislative priorities of Indian Country. NCAI requests that the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs works with us on the planning of these forums and briefings to ensure that the Native voice will be heard on the Hill during that week.

NCAI would like to once again express its support for the National Museum of the American Indian, and thank the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs for holding this oversight hearing and for its extraordinary efforts to pave the way for this historic recognition of the American Indian and Alaska Native tribes of this Nation.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF W. RICK WEST, JR., DIRECTOR, NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

Mr. Chairman, Senator Inouye, and members of the committee, I am pleased and honored to be with you today to mark an occasion of great importance to the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian, to the tens of millions of Native people throughout the Americas, and to the citizens of this great Nation—namely, the day on which, after 1 decade of planning, development, and construction, the staff of the Museum are moving into our centerpiece building located at the very head of America's National Mall and the national capital's monumental core. This memorable occasion signifies the commencement of the 9-month period

leading to an even more important date—September 21, 2004—when the National Museum of the American Indian will open to the millions of people who will visit annually.

First, I would like to tell you briefly about the origins of this hemispheric institution of living Native cultures and peoples. Second, I want to describe what visitors will see and experience in this uniquely Native place. Finally, beyond its impressive architecture and physical presence, I want you to understand, as best I can communicate it, the philosophy and spirit that always have shaped and driven, and, indeed, are the National Museum of the American Indian.

The origins of this 21st century cultural institution are grounded in the most remarkable assemblage of the cultural patrimony of the first citizens of the Americas, coupled with enlightened and farsighted political and public action and support. The collections of the Museum are, in many important respects, without compare, encompassing some 800,000 objects that stretch geographically from Tierra del Fuego in South America to the Arctic Circle in North America, and covering some 10,000 years in time—little wonder that, a decade and half ago, both the Congress of the United States and the Smithsonian embraced the idea that ours was a national collection that should sit within America's preeminent national cultural institution. Authorized by a Democratic Congress, with the authorizing legislation signed by a Republican President, and supported by more than 250,000 members of the American and international public since its founding, the National Museum of the American Indian always has represented a seminal cultural initiative that utterly transcends conventional political, cultural, and geographic boundaries.

Its complicated, and sometimes even challenging, journey of creation began with the opening of the George Gustav Heye Center in 1994. Our Cultural Resources Center, a state-of-the-art research and study center, and home to our collections, located just outside of Washington, DC, opened in 1999. Our journey will culminate, as it should, with a powerfully symbolic Native presence on the National Mall that opens on September 21, 2004.

And what a very special day—for everyone—September 21, 2004 will be. I know that it will be not only a good day, but also a beautiful day—no late September hurricanes will be permitted this coming fall. That moment in the history of the National Museum of the American Indian will begin as thousands of Native people, many of them in the resplendent regalia that marks their communities, and their non-Native friends and supporters move together, in procession, down the National Mall, beginning at the Smithsonian's key icon, the "Castle," to a ceremonial place of commemoration and dedication located at the foot of the Capitol Building just across the street from the Museum itself. Following a brief opening ceremony, and I personally promise it will be that, the thousands of well-wishers and celebrants, Native and non-Native alike, will proceed to the Museum itself.

Their first introduction to this Native place will occur as they step onto the very site itself. Far beyond conventional notions of landscape architecture, the ecoenvironment that surrounds the building will mark it as a different destination. Greeted by "Grandfather rocks," walking beside a tumbling stream from the time they enter the site until they reach the building entrance on the east, passing by hundreds of plantings carefully selected to evoke that site in all its pre-contact natural wonder, visitors will pass through a generous and welcoming portal to the building itself.

Inside and once past the interior welcoming areas, they will find themselves in the captivating and perhaps defining space of the building—the Potomac. This atrium, which soars some five museum stories high, the full height of the building, welcomes and even encourages, through its ample windows, visual connections between the building and its environmental surround. It is a central gathering space for the building, the home for varied public programs of dance, music, other performance art, and demonstration that confirm not only the deep, rich, and varied cultural past of the Native peoples of the Americas, but also, and as important, their cultural contemporaneousness as cultural phenomena of the present and not just the past.

Beyond the Potomac and in the principal galleries of the Museum, visitors will see three inaugural permanent exhibitions that reflect its fundamental belief that Native peoples themselves can speak with knowledge and authenticity about the objects they have created through the millennia, as well as the ideas and philosophies that motivated their creation. In developing these installations, we collaborated with some 2-dozen Native communities from throughout the Western Hemisphere that selected objects from our collections and interpreted them within the framework of the major exhibition themes.

Those themes, also based on extensive consultations with Native communities and others from throughout the Americas, encompass, in many ways, the wholeness of Native life. The first exhibition, entitled "Our Universes," addresses Native philoso-

phy and cosmology, what makes us think and live the way we have in the past and do now, the fundamental underpinnings of our existence through time and space. The second installation, "Our Peoples," represents a seminal opportunity for Native communities, and the objects they have selected for the exhibition, to speak directly to those events considered central to their histories. Finally, in confirmation of the fact that tens of millions of Native peoples are still among us in the Americas—right now—the third exhibition, "Our Lives," looks to the evolution, through time and up to the present, of the individual and communal identities of these first citizens of the Western Hemisphere.

In addition to all that goes on inside this Native place on the National Mall, the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian will include, for almost the entire week following September 21, 2004, "The First Americans Festival," to expand and enhance further our visitors' knowledge and views of Native America, past and present. A memorable combination of music, dance, song, theater, symposia, and seminars, the Festival will sit physically on the National Mall between the Capitol Building of the Nation on the east and the Washington Monument on the west—surely a most remarkable and welcoming act of cultural sharing by those who were here with those who came.

Finally, I want to give you a sense of the philosophy, the sensibilities, and the spirit that sit behind, that ground all that I have said about the National Museum of the American Indian, its imposing physical structures, and its ambitious exhibitions and public programs. I do so because this sense is absolutely essential to a real understanding of the true meaning and significance of September 21, 2004.

The National Museum of the American Indian, indeed, does represent the long overdue and entirely appropriate recognition and affirmation of the vast cultural contributions that Native peoples and communities have made and continue to make to all that we define as "civilization." A case can be made that Native America, as the originating element of American heritage, should have been among the first to be acknowledged with a museum on the National Mall—and yet we arrived last. But in an illuminating act of great symbolism, we now occupy the first or keystone place in America's monumental core, sitting as we do at the very foot of the national Capitol Building and directly across from what many consider to be the apex, the apotheosis of western civilization, the East Wing of the National Gallery—a placement, at long last, between equals in the political and cultural heart of America. This circling back of American history on itself to a new point of affirmation and resolution is not only completely right—for me it comes as close to pure historical poetry as I could ever imagine.

The National Museum of the American Indian, however, does not stop here, worthy as this aspiration and goal are—it is much more. This international institution of living Native cultures and communities represents, ultimately, a pivotal meeting ground, a significant historical opportunity for the Native and non-Native worlds to achieve a profoundly important cultural understanding and reconciliation that has eluded American history from its beginning. That understanding and reconciliation are grounded not only in recognition of the legitimate place of Native peoples in the histories of the Americas, but also in an appreciation, on the part of both Natives and non-Natives, that all of us share a common humanity that transcends ethnic and cultural differences at the same it recognizes and embraces them.

No person has described better what the Smithsonian's 21st century National Museum of the American Indian is all about. Through it, tens of thousands of years of Native culture, experience, history, and worthiness are redeemed by this Native place that sits in the heart of the Nation. Through that redemption, the Museum creates an unprecedented and remarkable opportunity for mutual understanding and cultural reconciliation that provides a marker for the ages. The Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian: Cultural redemption and reconciliation in the 21st century.

Now I would like to briefly touch on our fiscal year 2005 budget request. Fiscal Year 2005 will be the first full operational year for the National Museum of the American Indian on the Mall. Just days from our official opening on September 21 of this year, the new fiscal year will start. Our request for increases for the 2005 appropriations cycle are key to the provision of full programmatic and operational needs of the last museum opening on the Nation's Mall. This request reflects specific needs to address the new aspects of our operations directly related to the public attendance at the museum.

Therefore, we are asking the Congress for authority to increase our FTE by 7 and our base operating budget by \$1.102M (including \$602K for one time costs and \$500K, mostly for salaries and benefits.) One time costs are for technology support and visitor services opening needs. The remainder is for salaries and benefits for 7 new positions, mainly in the public programs area. In addition we have requested

authority to redirect previous one time money in the amount of \$2.536M and 27 FTE to become a part of our base in order to support various needs of the Mall Museum operation.

The fiscal year 2005 request also reflects a programmatic decrease of \$700K and 9FTEs for development staff and a decrease of \$6.843M for one time costs associated with the opening of the Mall Museum. This estimate also reflects restoring the fiscal year 2004 rescissions (\$477K).

Although these needs are reflected elsewhere in the Smithsonian Institution budget, the opening of the NMAI will put a severe strain on the Institution's security and facilities operations budgets. I anticipate very large numbers of visitors to the Museum that will demand increased levels of security consistent with a heavily visited Museum at the foot of the Congress and that will also require increased facilities support to maintain the building as large crowds gain access.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony before this committee, I would be glad to answer any questions you may have.

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