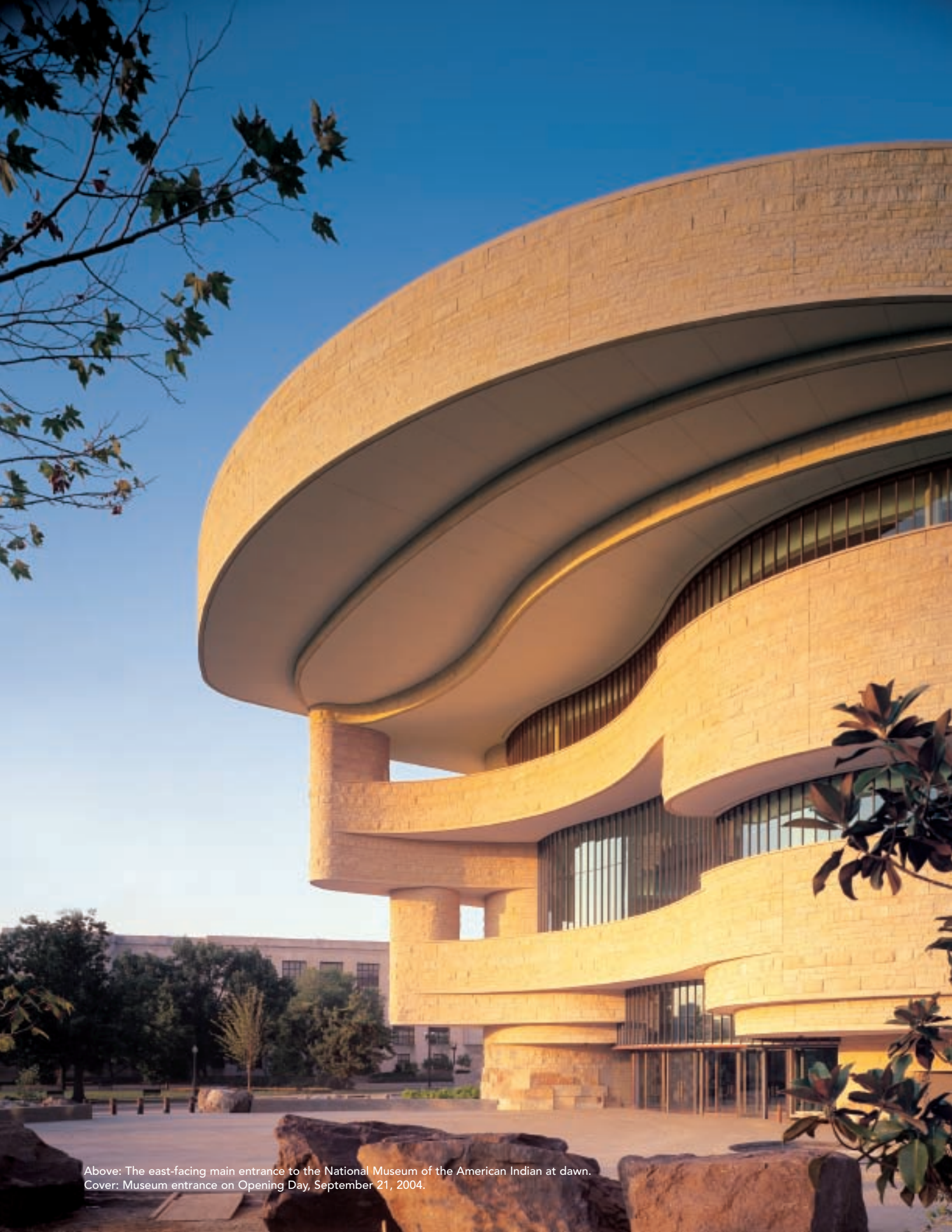


National Museum of the American Indian

STRATEGIC PLAN 2006–2008



Smithsonian
National Museum of the American Indian



National Museum of the American Indian

STRATEGIC PLAN 2006–2008



Smithsonian
National Museum of the American Indian

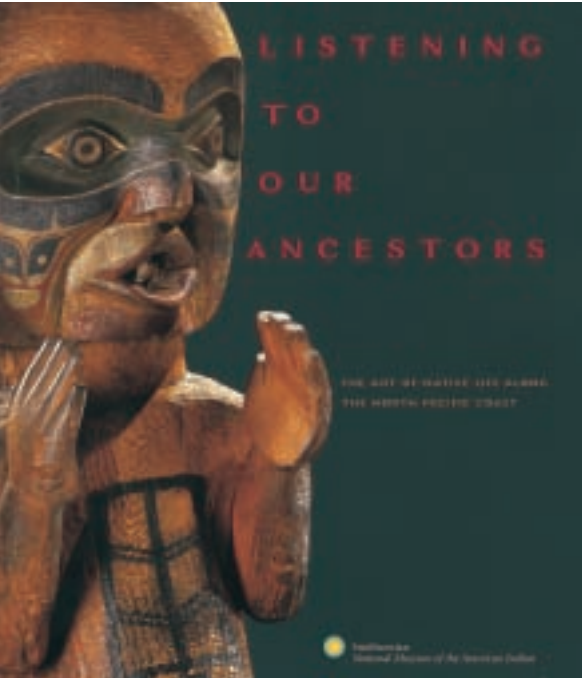
Above: The east-facing main entrance to the National Museum of the American Indian at dawn.
Cover: Museum entrance on Opening Day, September 21, 2004.

NMAI Board of Trustees, 2005

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For information about the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, visit the NMAI website at www.AmericanIndian.si.edu.

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Accompanying the museum's exhibition of the same title, the book *Listening to Our Ancestors: The Art of Native Life along the North Pacific Coast* offers a deeper understanding of the region's Native peoples.



Kwakwaka'wakw welcome figure, 19th c.

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Plans, Maps, Instructions

When we opened the doors of the National Museum of the American Indian’s beautiful and welcoming new site on the National Mall in September of 2004, we had a sense of completion and fulfillment. After years of hard work, planning, fundraising, and construction, all three locations of the Museum were finally a reality.

That sense of fulfillment, however, was ephemeral. We learned quickly that, in some crucial ways, it is more difficult to run a museum than to build one. Suddenly, visitors were not abstract projections, but thousands of live human beings with needs and expectations. While our worries about opening the Mall building were behind us, our concerns about elevators and bathrooms, heating systems and restaurant odors, not to mention exhibition schedules, were only just beginning.

This strategic plan is a map that will help guide us through the complexities of operating the National Museum of the American Indian. It proposes a coherent set of goals and objectives that address our aspirations for the Museum along with the steps necessary to serve our visitors and our Native constituents. I am hopeful that this plan will be an important tool not only in making the Museum a model organization, but in helping us realize our role as a meeting place for Indigenous people from all over the world.

This document does its job well, I think. If we adhere to its guidelines with determination, we will achieve our goals. What the plan cannot include, however, is a more intangible dimension that I think is equally important in defining our work and mapping out our future. The National Museum of the American Indian is a place of potent spiritual meaning for Indigenous people and, I hope, for all who come here. On the eve of our opening on the Mall, we hosted a symposium that focused on the NMAI’s significance among 21st-century museums. That wonderful event ended with a moving blessing by Seneca leader G. Peter Jemison. Let me conclude by citing a part of his blessing:

“And next we turn our thoughts to those teachers, those messengers, who have come to all the different people with the same message: to love one another, to treat one another with respect, to treat all living things with respect. We should listen to these instructions that the Creator has provided us through these messengers. And so we turn our thoughts to these great teachers, and we put our minds together as one, and now our minds are one.”

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "W. Richard West, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

W. Richard West, Jr.
(Southern Cheyenne and member of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma)
Founding Director

Message from the Chairman



On behalf of the members of the Board of Trustees, I am pleased to present to you the strategic plan for the National Museum of the American Indian. Like the Museum itself, this document embodies and reflects the profound pride all of us feel about this magnificent institution.

The assumptions, goals, and objectives contained in this document represent another important step in the evolving and changing life of the museum. Developing a strategic plan for any institution is always a demanding task and challenge, but all the more so for a museum whose purview extends across a hemisphere and embraces the cultures, arts, and traditions of Native and Indigenous peoples from the Arctic to Antarctic. For us as trustees, this vastness presents a unique planning dilemma—namely, how to help focus and guide the work of NMAI in a way that would be most beneficial and meaningful to as many of our constituents as possible. In other words, we are faced with the requirement to make reasoned, deliberate, and responsible choices about the Museum and its work. And we are very pleased with the outcome.

We enjoy a highly collaborative relationship with the leadership and staff of the Museum, and our collective sense of purpose and direction guided all of us as we considered options for the planning period. We feel confident in the talents, skills, and commitment of NMAI staff, and look forward to the coming years with excitement and enthusiasm.

We on the Board of Trustees come from different walks of life and different experiences. We work and reside in cities and in rural areas, north, south, east, and west. We are both Native and non-Native. Yet, despite our disparate backgrounds and lives, we share many things—a love and appreciation of Native arts; a profound sense of responsibility for the preservation of Native culture, language, and tradition; and an abiding commitment to our role as stewards of the National Museum of the American Indian and all it represents.

Our pride and purpose is clear and joyful. We welcome you to experience the Museum.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dwight A. Gourneau".

Dwight A. Gourneau (Turtle Mountain Chippewa)
Chairman, NMAI Board of Trustees

I

Mission Statement

The National Museum of the American Indian is committed to advancing knowledge and understanding of the Native cultures of the Western Hemisphere—past, present, and future—through partnership with Native people and others. The Museum works to support the continuance of culture, traditional values, and transitions in contemporary Native life.



The museum's opening celebration brought more than 80,000 people to the National Mall on September 21, 2004.



More than 100,000 people visited the museum during its opening week.

II

NMAI Goals for the FY 2006–2008 Planning Period

- Goal 1: Ensure that the visitor experience at all NMAI venues is welcoming, respectful, engaging, and authentic
- Goal 2: Plan and conduct a diversified community-services program to serve and support Native communities in the hemisphere through linkages to NMAI
- Goal 3: Apply care and use practices that honor cultural integrity and provide for the care, preservation, expansion, and use of NMAI collections
- Goal 4: Foster and support innovative Native and non-Native scholarship in ways that extend, preserve, and disseminate Indigenous knowledge, culture, and language
- Goal 5: Align, integrate, and manage NMAI's physical, financial, human, management, and technological resources and systems to ensure effectiveness and measurable productivity in all aspects of the Museum's operations
- Goal 6: Foster and sustain a productive work environment that supports the recruitment, retention, and recognition of NMAI's staff
- Goal 7: Design and implement an integrated and successful fundraising, marketing, and public relations program to support NMAI and its future



Raven Steals the Sun, a work by contemporary Tlingit artist Preston Singletary, welcomes visitors at the entrance of the Mall Museum exhibition *Our Universes: Traditional Knowledge Shapes Our World*.

III

Smithsonian Directives Reflected in the NMAI Strategic Plan

PUBLIC IMPACT

- Goal 1: Ensure that the visitor experience at all NMAI venues is welcoming, respectful, engaging, and authentic
- Goal 2: Plan and conduct a diversified community-services program to serve and support Native communities in the hemisphere through linkages to NMAI

FOCUSED, FIRST-CLASS RESEARCH

- Goal 3: Use care practices that honor cultural integrity and provide for the preservation, expansion, and use of NMAI collections
- Goal 4: Foster and support innovative Native and non-Native scholarship in ways that extend, preserve, and disseminate Indigenous knowledge, culture, and language

MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE

- Goal 5: Align, integrate, and manage NMAI's physical, financial, human, management, and technological resources and systems to ensure effectiveness and measurable productivity in all aspects of the Museum's operations
- Goal 6: Foster and sustain a productive work environment that supports the recruitment, retention, and recognition of NMAI's staff

FINANCIAL STRENGTH

- Goal 7: Design and implement an integrated and successful fundraising, marketing, and public relations program to support NMAI and its future



Opened in October 1994, the George Gustav Heye Center in lower Manhattan serves as the National Museum of the American Indian's exhibition and education facility in New York City.

IV

Strategic Assumptions & Objectives

Goal 1: Ensure that the visitor experience at all NMAI venues is welcoming, respectful, engaging, and authentic

STRATEGIC ASSUMPTIONS

1. The NMAI visitor experience will be uniquely Native, and the Native voice will continue to be integral to every aspect of the experience.
2. The public's demand for information about Native peoples and their communities, NMAI's collections, and related topics will grow dramatically and exceed NMAI's capacity and ability to respond.
3. NMAI will be perceived as the premier resource for public information related to Native peoples and their communities, both past and present.
4. NMAI's visitors will be diverse, both in reflecting American society and in representing many other nationalities, and they will have preexisting perceptions that will define and influence their views of Indigenous peoples.
5. Demand for constituency-specific group programs will grow substantially through the period, exceeding NMAI's capacity to satisfy all groups.
6. An increasing number of visitors will access NMAI through its website.
7. Public interest will create an increased demand at all NMAI sites for programs that reflect Native experiences and serve all age groups and audiences.
8. The NMAI exhibitions program will be active and rotating, incorporating the Native voice in all its facets and drawing on NMAI's resources and relationships.
9. NMAI will be approached to establish partnerships with other entities whose work is consistent with the NMAI mission.
10. Demand for educational resource materials will continue to expand beyond NMAI's current capacity.



The Chicago Indian Center community gallery, featured in the exhibition *Our Lives: Contemporary Life and Identities*.



A dancer at NMAI's First Nations Festival, Washington, D.C., September 21–28, 2004.

OBJECTIVES

1. Continue programmatic integration in all areas—including exhibitions, live performances, symposia, access via the internet, and other activities and resources—to engage all visitors, including members of Native communities.
2. Actively seek ways to influence both educational resource materials and methods of learning and teaching related to Native culture, community, and tradition, particularly for pre-school- and elementary-age children.
3. Conduct periodic evaluations and assessment to determine visitor interest, satisfaction, comprehension, and other relevant variables.
4. Expand and improve the quality of and access to the NMAI website as a gateway to the overall portfolio of NMAI programs.
5. Develop educational programs that serve all age groups and publics and reflect the Native experience, and distribute them through all NMAI sites and by other means through the use of technology.
6. Continue to design and implement special programs for school and family audiences, ensuring that NMAI materials are accurate and help students meet curricular standards.
7. Utilize different media, including public performance, to express and enhance awareness of the Native experience. Such events and programs will take place at the Mall Museum, the George Gustav Heye Center (GGHC), and other venues.
8. Maintain an active and rotating exhibition program with a commitment to reflect as many tribes as possible. The program will be consistent with NMAI and SI goals and objectives, incorporating all facets of the Native experience and drawing on NMAI's resources and relationships.
9. Ensure that exhibitions adhere to applicable criteria for accessibility, safety, and building codes, and conform to accepted professional standards.
10. Implement an ongoing exhibition program that uses a combination of self-generated and outside exhibition models for developing exhibitions, ensuring that exhibitions will be innovative and engaging.
11. When applicable, seek out partnerships with other entities whose programs, capabilities, and work is consistent with, and complimentary to, the NMAI mission.
12. Support access to and the use of NMAI's Resource Center as a means of providing current information about NMAI and Native peoples of the Western Hemisphere to the general public.
13. Continue to provide NMAI's visitors an effective entry and helpful orientation, utilizing available technological tools and resources.
14. Maintain a diversified and ongoing publications program that educates the public about the history and significance of Native cultures through the production of books, recordings, children's and educational materials, brochures, retail products, and other printed matter.
15. Maintain the ongoing film and video program via the Film and Video Center. Expand and care for the center's study collection of recent works by independent and Native American filmmakers and provide information to Native communities, cultural organizations, educators, and the general public.



Works by renowned sculptor Allan Houser (Warm Springs Chiricahua Apache), showcased in the museum's inaugural exhibition *Native Modernism: The Art of George Morrison and Allan Houser*.

Goal 2: Plan and conduct a diversified community-services program to serve and support Native communities in the hemisphere through linkages to NMAI

STRATEGIC ASSUMPTIONS

1. Demand from Native communities for support and services from NMAI to build local cultural capacity will increase.
2. NMAI will continue to serve as a forum for Native peoples to express issues of concern to their communities.
3. Demand will require that access to NMAI by Native communities and institutions be improved, utilizing new and emerging technologies where possible.
4. The Smithsonian Institution will continue to focus its major programs and priorities on the United States.



Visitors participating in the Winter Round Dance in the museum's Potomac atrium, 2005.



Kiowa moccasin leggings, ca. 1875.

OBJECTIVES

1. Establish NMAI as a site for civic engagement in ways that provide a forum for expression by Native peoples; that ensure relevancy to the needs and interests of Native communities; and that programmatically extend the work of NMAI beyond the walls of its facilities into Native communities of the hemisphere.
2. Identify and pursue strategic alliances and partnerships with communities, institutions, and organizations, domestically and internationally, that are consistent with the mission of the Museum. Seek out initiatives that advance and support the cultural preservation and revitalization efforts of Indigenous communities, provide useful and accessible training opportunities to communities, extend and enrich the role of museums and cultural institutions and their relevance, and expand the reach of NMAI's resources.
3. Develop and implement a thoughtful and sensitive NMAI-wide strategy for Latin America that integrates NMAI programs, assets, and resources in a way that is responsive to the needs and interests of the Native/Indigenous communities of the region.
4. Integrate community service activities, including the provision of technical services to Native communities, with the work of units and departments across the Museum.
5. Work in collaboration with tribal historic preservation offices in the protection of graves and sacred sites.
6. Progressively incorporate a greater number of Indigenous communities in Canada and Central and South America in NMAI outreach and program development. This will require the development of new tools and methodologies to effectively support these communities.
7. Ensure the increased participation on the part of Indigenous communities that are not represented in the museum's collections or past programs, and develop an integrated approach for service with other NMAI departments.
8. Support Native communities seeking the repatriation of objects in the NMAI collection.
9. Assess program scope within the framework of available resources.
10. Help Native communities address the presence of contaminants in their collections.



A repatriation consultation at the CRC with members of the Comanche Tribe of Oklahoma: (from left) NMAI staff member Terry Snowball (Prairie Band Potawatomi/Wisconsin Ho-Chunk), Jimmy Arterberry (Comanche), and Ava Dot (Comanche).

Goal 3: Apply care and use practices that honor cultural integrity and provide for the care, preservation, expansion, and use of NMAI collections

STRATEGIC ASSUMPTIONS

1. Repatriation consultations regarding the return of Native objects and materials will continue on an ongoing basis, in response to community requests and NMAI initiative.
2. Demand for use of the collections database will increase progressively.
3. Although new acquisitions to the NMAI collection will remain ongoing in order to achieve balance in the collection, these efforts will be insufficient.
4. NMAI will stimulate and support the dynamic use and care of the collections by Native communities.
5. Demand for, and access to, loans from the NMAI collections will exceed NMAI's capacity to manage these programs.
6. NMAI will serve as a resource for other museums in the ways it provides for the care, preservation, use, and stewardship of Native collections.

OBJECTIVES

1. Review and update the NMAI collections policy on an ongoing basis.
2. Continue to provide care, preservation, and stewardship of all collections, consistent with traditional care principles.
3. Evaluate and mitigate concerns about contamination in collections storage.
4. Continue the respectful disposition of human remains and associated funerary objects in NMAI's possession.
5. Actively pursue meaningful acquisitions to expand the NMAI collection, with an emphasis on works and items that support and represent contemporary Native culture.
6. Implement, expand, and maintain the collections database (objects, photos, paper) and ensure user-friendly accessibility.
7. Provide researchers and other interested parties access to the collections.

The museum collaborated with performance artist James Luna (Luiseño) to feature an original installation, *Emendatio*, at the 2005 Venice Biennale. An accompanying book and international symposium explore Luna's work and the significance of today's Native artists, initiating conversations about contemporary Native work with a new international audience.



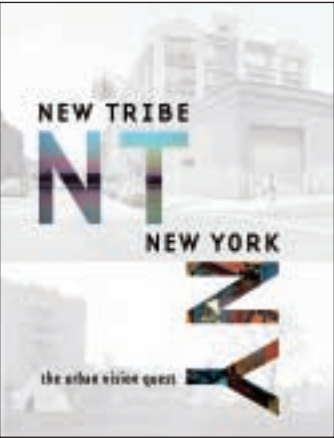
Goal 4: Foster and support innovative Native and non-Native scholarship in ways that extend, preserve, and disseminate Indigenous knowledge, culture, and language

STRATEGIC ASSUMPTIONS

1. The protection and preservation of Indigenous knowledge and language—in all its forms across the hemisphere—will be a topic of growing interest among Native communities and institutions.
2. Demand for information about Native peoples and their communities, NMAI's collections, and related topics will grow dramatically and exceed NMAI's capacity and ability to respond.
3. In response to demand, NMAI will identify specific steps to become a center and model for scholarship by, and regarding, Native communities.

OBJECTIVES

1. Actively support innovative Native scholarship and research by facilitating broad and flexible access to—and use of—NMAI's collections and related resources.
2. Expand NMAI's capacity to disseminate information to all audiences.
3. Establish partnerships with Native communities and relevant Native and non-Native institutions and organizations that share NMAI's commitment to scholarship.
4. Develop an updated research agenda in concert with the Research Committee of the Board of Trustees.
5. Develop frameworks and procedures to integrate effectively scholarship and research across all NMAI programs, groups, and units.
6. Develop plans and partnerships to support and facilitate the preservation of Indigenous language.



The NMAI publication *New Tribe: New York/The Urban Vision Quest*, which accompanies a GGHC exhibition of the same title, challenges stereotypes with the lively and diverse realities of the contemporary urban Native American experience.



The Santa Clara Pueblo community gallery, featured in the Mall Museum exhibition *Our Universes: Traditional Knowledge Shapes Our World*.

Goal 5: Align, integrate, and manage NMAI's physical, financial, human, management, and technological resources and systems to ensure effectiveness and measurable productivity in all aspects of the Museum's operations

STRATEGIC ASSUMPTIONS

1. Visitor volume at all NMAI facilities—particularly the Mall Museum—will either be stable or increase slightly through the period, which could place new strains on facility-based programs, services, and events.
2. NMAI management practices will follow and be consistent with Smithsonian policies, guidelines, and legislative mandates and NMAI's enabling legislation.
3. The Smithsonian will continue to raise standards and expectations for management, staff, and organizational performance, including the establishment of documented performance measures.
4. NMAI will forge and sustain productive relationships and collaboration with all SI institutional support units who share in the maintenance and/or administration of NMAI facilities.
5. NMAI will encounter significant federal budgetary constraints through the period, limiting program and staff expansion and compelling the Museum to offset declines with increases in other earned and/or contributed resources.
6. NMAI will face the need to make strategic and significant investments in technology to effectively manage its programs, services, and ongoing work; to disseminate information to its constituencies; and to communicate effectively.



Jack Hokeah (Kiowa, 1902–1969), *O-ho-mah Dancer*, 1929.



On the Mall Museum's third and fourth levels, the *Window on Collections: Many Hands, Many Voices* exhibition invites visitors to learn more about the objects on display via interactive touch screens.

OBJECTIVES

1. Sustain and manage NMAI's assets, technology, facilities, and infrastructure in a manner that optimizes their effective use.
2. Implement and support the restructuring of the NMAI staff organization across departmental lines to achieve greater efficiency, effectiveness, improved communication, enhanced collaboration, and streamlined decision-making.
3. Provide effective and responsible fiscal management of NMAI's resources to meet all of the changing needs, obligations, and priorities of NMAI and the Smithsonian.
4. Provide ongoing oversight and management of all NMAI facilities, including maintenance, security, and visitor support, in coordination with appropriate SI offices and the General Services Administration.
5. Administer an integrated, NMAI-wide technology and information management program that provides the services, capacity, and infrastructure support that are essential to facility and collections management, administrative support, communication, collaboration with Native communities and other entities, and overall database management and design.
6. Manage all NMAI-related budgeting activities on an integrated basis, including support and technical assistance to NMAI staff and provision of information to SI, OMB, and Congress for both baseline operations and new funding for the operation of the Mall Museum.
7. Manage all NMAI procurement and travel on an integrated basis, including technical procurement assistance and processing of all procurement and travel documentation.



View of the landscape and water feature at the National Museum of the American Indian.

Goal 6: Foster and sustain a productive work environment that supports the recruitment, retention, and recognition of NMAI’s staff

STRATEGIC ASSUMPTIONS

1. NMAI will continue to depend on a highly qualified and committed staff. It is likely that the need for qualified staff at NMAI will continue to exceed the Museum’s available resources to hire them.
2. NMAI staff productivity will be enhanced by modifications in the staff organization designed to bring about greater focus, expanded collaboration, and related efficiencies.
3. NMAI will continue to be proactive in hiring and training Native staff and in retaining Native contractors.
4. Performance evaluation will be based on measurable criteria, which will drive reward systems and individual advancement. Qualitative considerations will also continue to influence NMAI staff performance.
5. NMAI will continue to evaluate and implement options and incentives to stimulate staff retention and reward exemplary performance.

OBJECTIVES

1. Foster and sustain a productive and supportive work environment for NMAI that values initiative, creativity, and teamwork and that reflects an awareness of, and sensitivity to, Native culture, values, and protocols.
2. Pursue recruitment of qualified Native staff, including evaluation of innovative models for recruitment of Native staff.
3. Take active steps to support the personal and professional growth of all NMAI staff.
4. Manage an active, supportive, and responsive human-resources operation within NMAI, including recruiting, training, implementing disciplinary actions, tracking time and attendance, and maintaining performance plans and appraisals.
5. Establish annual staff performance plans that specify clear performance targets consistent with NMAI-wide organizational objectives.
6. Conduct regularly scheduled all-hands meetings to share updated information on NMAI’s activities and to encourage staff feedback and dialogue.
7. Conduct annual supervisor evaluations to identify areas for skill development and self-improvement.
8. Provide special training opportunities for NMAI staff to gain and expand knowledge and proficiency in key areas related to their individual work and consistent with NMAI needs and priorities.



Thomas Jefferson peace medal (1801), ca. 1870.

Goal 7: Design and implement an integrated and successful fundraising, marketing, and public relations program to support NMAI and its future

STRATEGIC ASSUMPTIONS

1. Demand for private contributions in support of NMAI programs, services, and activities will continue to escalate.
2. The prospects for the economy will continue to be uncertain.
3. Smithsonian fundraising policies and practices will continue to impact NMAI’s results.
4. Membership will continue to be a critical component of NMAI’s revenue mix. Sustaining membership will be an area of particular interest.
5. Identification, stewardship, and management of supporters will increase and intensify.
6. The need for long-term support of NMAI programs, services, and other needs—particularly via endowment—will become more apparent and will likely become an emerging financial priority.

OBJECTIVES

1. Identify and secure financial support directly from Native communities, individuals, corporations, foundations, and the federal government and from earned revenues from the sale of products and services.
2. Pursue other diversified development opportunities to support the programs of the GGHC, community outreach, endowment, exhibitions, and programming.
3. Plan and develop appropriate staffing, organization, and resources across departmental lines to meet the ever-increasing needs for attracting private-sector funding for NMAI projects and programs.
4. Involve community and corporate leaders in the mission and life of the Museum to ensure their motivation, personal commitment to, and participation in the long-term programs of the Museum.
5. Manage and grow the NMAI membership in a sustained and cost-effective manner.
6. Manage an ongoing and proactive public relations and media program to engage donors, corporations, and the media and increase their enthusiasm and support for the Museum’s mission and programs.

PHOTO CREDITS

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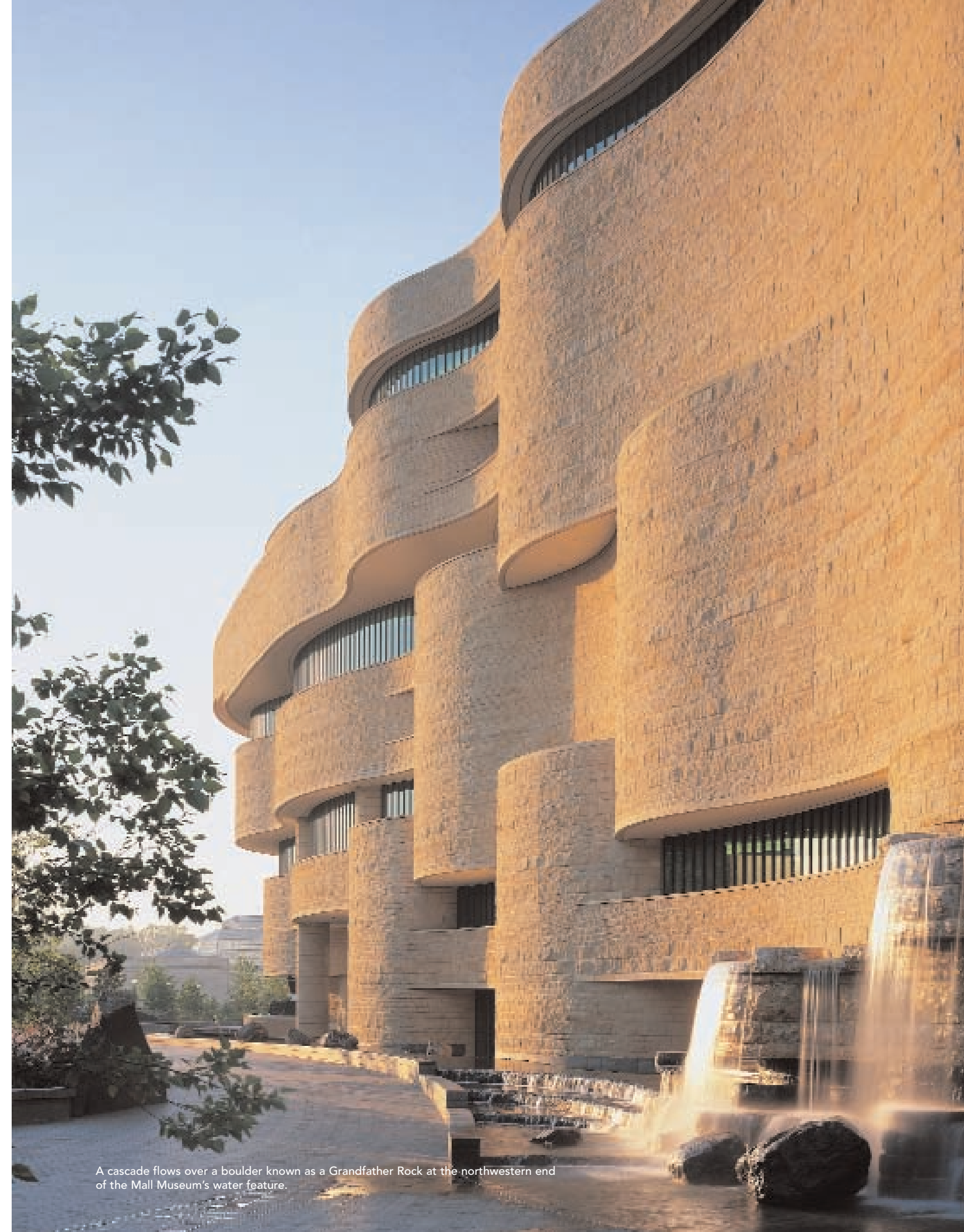
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A cascade flows over a boulder known as a Grandfather Rock at the northwestern end of the Mall Museum's water feature.