

For Immediate Release



From the exhibition, Women of Sweetgrass, Cedar and Sage, friends and community members outside the American Indian Community House Gallery, 1985. Photo by Jesse Cooday.

Urban Indian: Native New York Now

Opening at the Museum of the City of New York on September 27

New Exhibition Features Contemporary Art, Documentary, and Community Memorabilia

Examining Native Experience in New York

In Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of American Indian Community House (AICH)

Press Preview: Thursday, September 26, 10AM-12PM

(New York, NY, September 19, 2019) -Museum of the City of New York announced today that it will present ***Urban Indian: Native New York Now***, a new exhibition created in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the American Indian Community House (AICH). The show--which highlights a mix of contemporary artwork, video, and community memorabilia by Native Americans who have made their home in New York City--offers the opportunity for those who live here to reflect on tribal affiliations and the shared meaning of being a Native American in New York today. ***Urban Indian: Native New York Now*** will be on view from September 27, 2019 through February 15, 2020.

Like New York City itself, the Native American community here is marked by its plurality: the country's largest metropolis has residents with ties to a tremendous variety of federally recognized Tribal Nations. In and with this multiplicity of experience, Native people living in New York are building solidarity and social connections across diaspora and difference, engaging in explorations of what it means to be a Native person living and working in this city.

“Through ***Urban Indian: Native New York Now***, visitors will learn more about the diversity of experiences within the Native American community in New York City,” says Whitney Donhauser, Ronay Menschel Director and President of the Museum of the City of New York. “It offers everyone a starting point to learn about the flourishing and vibrant contemporary lives of Native Americans in NYC – one that we hope will spark curiosity and encourage people to go deeper and learn more.”

Shared authority, self-representation, and collaboration are at the center of this immersive and nuanced show. ***Urban Indian*** presents a wide-ranging sampling of recent cultural and community activities over the last 30 years by Native people who have made their home here. They reflect on tribal affiliations, local histories, community well-being, personal growth, intersectional experiences, and what it means—to them—to be Native.

“When asked to co-curate this exhibition, I was determined to make this a New York City show, not an ‘Indian’ show,” says Jason Lujan, (Chiricahua Apache, Texas), exhibition co-curator, artist and co-founder of Native Art Department International, “As such, it was our intent to create a gallery environment that mirrors what one would experience when stepping into the streets of the City: old and new; fast and slow; predictable and random, peaceful and chaotic, often all at once, everywhere.”

All pieces in ***Urban Indian: Native New York Now*** are about or made by members of the Native American community in New York City since the creative and financial boom of the 1980s. Rather than grouping items thematically or chronologically, the exhibition places objects purposely around the gallery to reflect the urban experience of disorder, friction, and flow and allowing the exploration of the plurality of the Native experience in New York and beyond.

“Given the histories of erasure, misrepresentation, and appropriation of Native cultural forms by museums and other cultural institutions, I found it particularly important for me, a non-Native ally co-curating this exhibition, to prioritize Native self-representation,” says Rebecca Hayes Jacobs, Ph.D., Mellon Postdoctoral Curatorial Fellow at the Museum of the City of New York. “You will find a lot of quotes from Native residents of New York City because Jason and I were interested in letting Native people speak for themselves to the greatest degree possible.”

Exhibition highlights include contemporary artwork and objects such as:

- Final tile design blueprint for ***Signal***, the **Mel Chin** and **Six Nations of the Iroquois and Seneca Tribe member G. Peter Jemison**’s site-specific collaboration, designed for MTA NYCT Broadway–Lafayette Street Station; commissioned by MTA Arts & Design (1995)
- **Pena Bonita**’s mixed media and burlap piece, ***Hanging Out on Iroquois and Algonquin Trails*** (2015); and **Jeffrey Gibson**’s spray paint and acrylic works on paper, ***Red Black and White #4 & #5*** (2007);
- Historical videos featuring first-person-perspectives such as "**Alphabet City Serenade**" by poet **Diane Burns** (1987) and the newly-unearthed and digitized footage of "**Two Spirits Speak Out**" (1992), an episode of cable TV program ***The Brenda and Glennnda Show*** that used guerrilla-drag street theater to address LGBTQ politics through humor;
- A newly produced video highlighting ***Louis Mofsie on the Thunderbirds’ 41st Annual Grand Mid-Summer Powwow***;
- **A protest banner** from the **Indigenous Kinship Collective** -- a community of Indigenous womxn and femme people who gather to honor themselves and their relatives through art, activism, and education.
- **A medicine bundle worn by a care provider** to Native Americans living with HIV and AIDS (1992);
- A theater drop quilt from **Spiderwoman Theater (2015)**—the oldest continuously running Native American, feminist theater in the world—made at a community workshop in Onondaga, New York. As it was being sewn, participants were guided through conversations about feminism, hope, and what it means to survive; and
- Publications such as ***Native Nations*** (1991)—a short-lived magazine of the (now defunct) Solidarity Foundation—that shared "news and analysis from Indian Country."

Urban Indian: Native New York Now was curated by Rebecca Hayes Jacobs, Ph.D., Mellon Postdoctoral Curatorial Fellow, Museum of the City of New York, and Jason Lujan (Chiricahua Apache, Texas), artist and co-founder of Native Art Department International; and designed by Marissa Martonyi. The exhibition was developed with a community leaders group composed of Curtis Davia (San Carlos Apache), Volunteer Executive Director, American Indian Community House; David Martine (Shinnecock/Montauk, Chiricahua Fort Sill Apache), artist and Director/Curator, Shinnecock Nation Cultural Center and Museum and Chairperson, AMERINDA; Diane Fraher (Osage/Cherokee), filmmaker and Founder and Director, AMERINDA; G. Peter Jemison (Seneca, Heron Clan), artist and Director of Ganondagan State Historic Site and Seneca Museum; Louis Mofsie (Hopi-Winnebago), Director and Founding Member, Thunderbird American Indian Dancers; Muriel Miguel (Kuna/Rappahannock), Founder and Director, Spiderwoman Theater; and Rick Chavolla (Kumeyaay), Board Chair, American Indian Community House.

Urban Indian: Native New York Now honors the 50th anniversary of American Indian Community House (AICH), a non-profit community organization that improves and promotes the well-being of Native Americans residing in New York. ***Urban Indian: Native New York Now*** and related programming are presented in collaboration with AICH and AMERINDA, a New York City-based Native American multi-arts organization.

The exhibition is part of a larger Museum of the City of New York engagement, which will include programming presented in collaboration with many of the community leaders and representatives from AICH and AMERINDA such as:

Family, Community and Public Programs

Native American Heritage Celebration

Sunday, October 13, 11am–2pm

FREE with Museum admission

Join us in celebrating the vast history and contemporary voices of Native American New Yorkers, who come from Tribal Nations from all over country. Enjoy storytelling and a performance of songs and dances of many tribes from the Northeast, Southwest, and Great Plains by the renowned Thunderbird American Indian Dancers. See Lenape objects in *New York at Its Core* and contemporary art by Native American New Yorkers in *Urban Indian: Native New York Now*, and create art to take home

Family programs are free with Museum admission and for Members, geared to families with children ages 6-12 years old, and include a snack. Activities are designed for adults and children to complete together.

"First Generation Off the Reservation": A Conversation with Muriel Miguel and Louis Mofsie

Tuesday, November 5, 6:30pm – 8:00pm

Price: \$12 & up | \$10 Museum Members

Join artists **Muriel Miguel** and **Louis Mofsie** for an intimate conversation about growing up in the 1940s and '50s as "first generation" Native New Yorkers born and raised in Brooklyn, not on a reservation. As teenagers, Mofsie and Miguel formed the Little Eagles, a performance group which eventually became the Thunderbird American Indian Dancers, the city's oldest resident Native American dance company. While Mofsie still acts as the director, Miguel went on to found Spiderwoman Theater, the longest running Indigenous feminist theater company on Turtle Island (i.e., North America). The two will sit down with performer **Soni Moreno** to consider how their work as performers, directors, choreographers, and educators has been influenced and informed by their experiences as Native New Yorkers. The program will begin with opening remarks from **David Martine**, Shinnecock Nation Tribal Historic Preservation

Officer, Educator, Artist, and Chairperson, AMERINDA.

This program is co-presented with the American Indian Community House and AMERINDA.

Field Trips:

Urban Indian: Native New York Now

Available to Grades 2-12, beginning November 3

Examine the impact that Native American people have had on New York City over the past 30 years and explore the shared meaning of being a Native person living in New York today through artwork, photographs and community memorabilia. Create art inspired by the work of Jaune Quick-to-See Smith investigating identity, geography, and pop culture.

Special Tour: Native Presence in New York

Offered to Grades 4-12; at 1pm or later Monday-Friday, beginning November 3

Originally Lenapehoking, the land of the Lenape, New York has been home to Native American people for thousands of years. This tour explores aspects of Native presence in New York from the original Lenape inhabitants, to the 20th century Mohawk community of Little Caughnawaga, to contemporary art by Native American New Yorkers in our exhibitions *New York at Its Core* and *Urban Indian: Native New York Now*.

Advance reservations are **required**. Visit <https://www.mcny.org/education/field-trips>

Educator Programs

Educator Evening | Urban Indian: Native New York Now

Thursday, October 3, 4:30 – 6:00pm

Educators are invited to learn more and explore the exhibition on a free, curator-led guided tour. CTLE

<https://www.mcny.org/events/educators>

For more information about upcoming public programs and other events, go to www.mcny.org/publicprograms.

The Museum gratefully acknowledges The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's support for exhibition co-curator Dr. Rebecca Jacobs's fellowship. ***Urban Indian: Native New York Now*** is her capstone project.

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About the Museum of the City of New York

The Museum of the City of New York fosters understanding of the distinctive nature of urban life in the world's most influential metropolis. It engages visitors by celebrating, documenting, and interpreting the city's past, present, and future. To connect with the Museum on social media, follow us on Instagram and Twitter at @MuseumofCityNY and visit our Facebook page at Facebook.com/MuseumofCityNY. For more information please visit www.mcny.org.

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