

**TEACHERS:** These activities are intended to help you facilitate conversation with students as you explore the areas of the museum.

People, Places, and Environments: *For thousands of years, indigenous peoples have observed, survived in, interacted with, and developed diverse cultures and cultivated deep abiding relationships with their homelands. These foundations continue to influence American Indian relationships and interactions with the land today.*



Carved and painted crab figure, 2000–02. Made by Jolanda Rios Vasquez (Zapotec). Oaxaca, Mexico. Wood, paint, 56 x 290 x 14.7 cm. NMAI 26/0603. Photo by Walter Larrimore.

Look for familiar constellations in the star canopy in the *Our Universes* gallery. Photo by Walter Larrimore.

#### 4th Level: *Window on Collections—Animals*

**LOOK:** Have students spend time looking at the objects in the cases.

**ASK:**

- *What similarities and differences do you see between all the objects?*
- *Why do you think these objects were displayed together? (See if students can determine a theme that ties all the objects together.)*
- *Do you think animals were important to Native American people? Why?*
- *Do you think animals are still important to Native American people today? How?*
- *Are animals important to you?*
- *Can animals teach us lessons? Do you know any stories with animals?*

**EXPLAIN:** In many Native cultures, the relationships between people and animals are very strong. Animals not only provided food, shelter, and clothing, but also play a role in origin stories, represent clans and families, and strengthen ideas and beliefs, such as what makes good behavior or how to avoid difficult situations. Sometimes, stories about animals help to make sense of the world around us.

#### 4th Level: *Our Universes*

**LOOK:** Have students look up at the stars. Sit and watch the different star stories.

**ASK:**

- *How many different stories did you hear and see?*
- *What animals did you see in the stories you watched?*
- *Do you know any stories about the stars?*
- *Why do you think people tell stories about the sun, moon, and stars?*
- *Can you find any objects with stars on them?*

**EXPLAIN:** The sun, moon, and stars help Native people order their daily lives. There are many stories about the sun, moon, and stars that tell Native



Beaded bandolier bag (detail) with star designs, ca. 1920. Wisconsin, probably Ho-Chunk. Wool cloth, glass bead/beads, wool twill tape, wool yarn, thread, 97 x 50 cm. NMAI 24/8774.



people how the world came to be. For example, the Tlingit tell the story of how Raven stole the sun, moon, and stars from a greedy man and released them into the sky. The Navajo tell the story of Coyote who, impatient for his turn to place his star in the sky, stole the blanket holding all the stars and threw them into the sky. Many Native tribes observed the stars to know when to plant, harvest, and hold ceremonies or celebrations.



The Lone Dog Winter Count (Nakota) features pictographs drawn to represent memorable events marking the passage of a year. Winter count or calendar, ca. 1870. Made by Shunka Ishnala (Lone Dog, Nakota, life dates unknown), 60 X 84 in. NMAI 01/0617. Photos by Janine Jones.



#### 4th Level: *Our Universes*—Lakota

**LOOK:** Have students find the large object made of bison hide with drawings on it.

**ASK:**

- *What animal do you think this object is made from?*
- *How do you think this animal was important to the Lakota?*
- *What do you think these drawings mean?*
- *Can you find any drawings that look like the sun, moon, or stars? What do you think they mean?*

**EXPLAIN:** This is a bison (buffalo) hide. Bison were used for food, shelter, clothing, stories, etc. The hide with the drawings is called a winter count. A winter count was used to record and tell the stories (history) of important tribal events. The sun, moon, and stars record meteor showers and an eclipse.



Grace Zimiga (Grace Hawkins, Lakota, 1913–1980), *Sundance Star*, ca. 1968–80. North and South Dakota. Cotton cloth, muslin, thread, 155 x 226 cm. NMAI 26/6306. Photo by Walter Larrimore.

Lakota woman making a star quilt.  
Photo courtesy of Buechel Memorial Lakota Museum.

#### 4th Level: *Our Universes*—Lakota (continued)

**LOOK:** Have students find the star quilt.

**ASK:**

- *What do you think a star quilt is?*
- *How do you think it a start quilt is made?*
- *Is the star quilt the same as the bison winter count? Why or why not?*
- *What moral value does the star quilt represent? Why?*
- *What story might this star quilt tell us?*

**EXPLAIN:** Lakota women make quilts with a large eight-pointed star in the middle. It stands for the morning star, or Venus, which often appears in the sky just before dawn; it reminds the Lakota people to give thanks every day. Wohpe (Wo-Pay), the Morning Star, was the daughter of the Sun and the Moon. She brought the Sacred Pipe to the Lakota people, which they use in their ceremonies and celebrations to give thanks. Star quilts are a modern way the Lakota express the values of their culture. The star in the quilt can be any color. It is sewn by hand using many diamond shapes.



This painting is a representation of the Milky Way over Cusco, Peru, during July and August. This is when the sky is clear and most of the Inka constellations can be easily observed.

Miguel Araoz Cartagena (b. 1977), *The Milky Way*, 2014. Courtesy of the Museo del Convento de Santo Domingo, Cusco, Peru.

The llama is the most important constellation in the Inka cosmos. Photos by Doug McMains, NMAI.

### 3rd Level: *The Great Inka Road: Engineering an Empire*

**LOOK:** Have students go to the interactive “Mayu, the Andean Milky Way.”

**ASK:**

- *Can stars make shapes in the sky?*
- *What do we call those shapes? What shapes do you know?*
- *Do you think there can be shapes made without stars?*
- *Can you find the Llama? Shepherd? Toad? Yutu (bird)?*
- *Why do you think these animals are important to the Inka people?*
- *Can looking at the stars or planets in the sky help the Inka people? How?*



**EXPLAIN:** Many cultures see figures in groupings of stars called constellations. The Inka saw figures in the dark spaces between the stars, known as *yana phuyu* (dark clouds).

In Andean communities, women own the llama flocks. Llamas are used to carry heavy loads and their wool makes warm clothing. The appearance of the Hanp’atu (toad) and the Yutu (bird) marked time to plant or the end of a harvest.