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Reflection Paper Visit to The National Museum of American Indians

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My visit to the Museum of American Indian was very educational, entertaining and interesting at the same time. My tour began the moment I proceeded to security check, the treatment was second to none as the staff was very courteous and friendly, even the security officers shared their knowledge of how best to enjoy the exhibits on display such as Niagara Falls where the Tuscarora women sold their beadwork to tourists to support their families. I was thought that if you video the exhibit with the flash from the camera off, and walk back and forth, it actually looks like the water below the falls in real time. And how to sit in the canoe and position yourself in such a way that prevents you from falling, and causes you to embrace this mode of transportation that the Lenape tribe used, as well as those coming to the Island to trade or conduct business.

As I made my way through the halls of the museum looking at every picture, read the history of the Indian people, and listened to the recordings, I became overwhelmed with emotions. I felt angry because of what was done to these people, I felt a sense of guilt knowing that the land that I was walking on, and all the things that I loved about Manhattan was stolen from a people and that they were forced to relocate somewhere else and call that place home. Each exhibit told the story of the Native people that settled on the Western Hemisphere long before Christopher Columbus set sail, the Dutch, French or any other nation, and how they were either tricked into or fought and lost their land because of greed from those that seemed to have been more powerful.

The museum told the story through it's art and collection of the native people by 1492 in the Americas which was home to societies that ranged from federations of small hunting, fishing, and farming villages. The exhibits focused on the Tristate but more specifically New York and the tribes that once called this state home. It was interesting to know that long before New York existed or was a state, it included thousands of Native towns, cornfields, and so much more. And how European traders among other colonists migrated and forced some of the Native people to seek safety in other parts of the country. And even though we may not see them, they still remain deeply connected to their New York homeland.

I was intrigued by the rich history of Manhattan or Manhatta as it was called by the Lenape (Delaware) which means "place for gathering wood to make bows." The Island had forests that were filled with fruits, nuts, and animals. The trees were used for making canoes, tools and homes. For the native people that lived here the Island provided an easy access to routes for trade with other peoples. Where the Harlem and Hudson Rivers meet is a great fishing spot. It was known as SHORAKAPKOK (the sitting down place.) The story is told of how for centuries Native people gathered near there every year to catch fish as they migrated upriver to lay eggs. SAPOHANIKAN (The canoe landing place) was the waterways surrounding Manhatta and was the highways of the day. Native people living nearby used the boats to travel to Manhatta to hunt, trade, or harvest with those who lived on the island. And how the director of the Dutch settlement Peter Minuit visited Manhatta after a previous visits, and tricked the Lenape tribe. What they thought was an agreement to share the land, was later discovered as a sale transaction or official handing over of the land for \$24 guilders. The Dutch assumed ownership at the southern part of tip of Manhatta which was also called New Amsterdam.

Conclusion

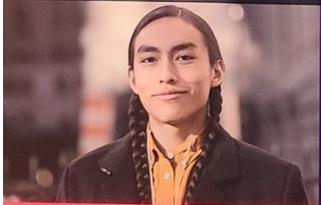
My take away from the museum was a line in the introduction of the video exhibition which stated that “history has many sides, and based on which side is telling the story, that’s the side of history that will be told.” I was happy that I had the opportunity to be exposed to this side of Our American history, so now I’m able to reflect on freedom and what it cost those that we have not recognized, and to appreciate what we have not because of what we were taught but because of the value.



WHO IS A NATIVE
NEW YORKER?



WHY DOES THE
PAST MATTER?



WHAT MAKES A
PLACE HOME?

Photo: Andrew Chen/Alamy; Photo: Kimbley DeWitt/Alamy; Photo: David and Sarah York/Alamy; Photo: Pauline Pichard/Alamy; Photo: David Green/Alamy

INDIAN CORN

of the Americas





You have guns and so have we. You have powder and lead, and so have we. You have men and so have we. Your men will fight and so will ours, till the last drop of the Seminole's blood has moistened the dust of his hunting ground.

OSCEOLA

Statement given to Brigadier General Duncan L. Clinch on February 2, 1834.



