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Museum Visit Reflection Paper

The National Museum of the American Indian is also called the George Gustav Heye Center. George Gustav Heye is the founder of this museum and began collecting Native American artifacts back in 1903. It was first opened in 1922 as a branch of the National Museum of the American Indian at the Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House in NYC. All the exhibitions are related to historical and contemporary art and artifacts about Native Americans. The purpose of the establishment was to let more people memorize and acknowledge the history of American Indians. This museum hosts exhibits, dance and music performances, workshops for children, home and school programs, and film screenings that showcase the diversity of Native American peoples and their cultural strength from earliest times to the present.

Although I visited Manhattan numerous times, I haven't noticed this American Indian Museum. Before seeing the exhibits, the interior of the building was magnificent, especially the ceiling. Anyway, it was tough for me to pick the most prominent item from all the exhibits because the quantity and diversity of the exhibition were beyond my expectations. One of the most impressive items on display was the Quipu, usually consisted of spun, plied and colored strings from llama hair. Last semester I studied world history class, and my professor introduced it to us.

Quipus were widely used as recording devices by the Inka Empire, the largest empire in pre-Columbian America. People were knotting strings on Quipus to store data and communicate information, which can be seen as early computers or information storage. After hearing it for the first time, I was impressed by the creativity of ancient people. Seeing it in this museum was unexpected for me.

During the visit, I prefer to see the exhibitions by myself. Although many museum staffs are available to guide visitors, I never requested their services. This way, I can arrange and save my own time. In summary, my vision broadens their vision after the visit. Culture concentrates on intellectual achievements, beliefs, social habits, social hierarchies, and the arts of a particular society or ethnicity. I noticed that the patterns of artworks made by American Indians always have different vibrant colors. Although the details are not meticulous as in ancient Chinese art, the design is more creative. Fringe is a widely used design on clothes with gradient colors. Feather is another common decoration in American Indian culture. It symbolizes braveness, power, honor, trust, strength, and freedom. Therefore, the feather is a sacred item for them.