

Glenbow Museum Launches New Blackfoot Website

Calgary, AB (July 19, 2005) – Glenbow Museum has launched a unique interactive online experience that teaches grade school children about the history of the Blackfoot culture. This new online exhibit, *Niisitapiisini: Our Way of Life*, invites users to experience the day-to-day lives of the Blackfoot people from both historical and contemporary perspectives.

Developed in partnership with the Alberta Online Consortium and the Virtual Museum of Canada (VMC), an initiative of the Department of Canadian Heritage, this website will be used as a resource tool for Alberta educators. The website has been developed to meet the provincial curriculum guidelines for grades four to six and is available in both Flash and HTML and in three languages: Blackfoot, English and French.

Niisitapiisini: Our Way of Life website can be accessed through Glenbow Museum's website at www.glenbow.org or and the VMC website at www.virtualmuseum.ca.

Niisitapiisini: Our Way of Life is a website that includes activities designed to engage learners as they discover the complexity and uniqueness of the Blackfoot culture. The website has been developed in the same way many Blackfoot People told their stories – using what they called “Story Robes,” in which buffalo hides were decorated with symbols and graphics to signify a moment in time. Featuring nearly 150 artifacts and archival photographs, the website also includes 10 streaming media clips. The online exhibition is divided into sections that tell the story of the Blackfoot people: how they lived with the land, the buffalo, their families, and other people. Within the website, each activity has its own unique theme, design and functionality, creating a highly visual and engaging experience.

Using Flash technology, this online gallery experience allows users to learn traditional stories and personal experiences recounted by members of the Blackfoot community. Educators will be able to use the website as a classroom tool for students to learn about Blackfoot culture, find out about Blackfoot life before Europeans, understand how contact with western settlers forever altered their lives, and how Blackfoot descendants are preserving their culture and traditions today.

The website content was primarily drawn from Glenbow's permanent *Niisitapiisini* Blackfoot gallery which explores the traditions, values, and history of the Blackfoot people in their own words. Showcasing Glenbow's renowned Blackfoot collection, this interactive gallery, and now a new website, is based on over 15 years of collaboration and friendship between Glenbow Museum and the Blackfoot community.

The *Niitsitapiisini: Our Way of Life* website follows two months after Glenbow Museum's recently redeveloped corporate website was unveiled in May 2005. In early fall 2005, Glenbow will launch *Mavericks: An Incurable History of Alberta*, a website that tells the story of our province through the lives of 45 maverick individuals who have contributed to Alberta's history. Users will be able to access over 500 artifacts, maps, archival documents, and historic photographs from Glenbow's diverse collection that will help tell the tale of our intriguing past. This online exhibit will provide a sneak preview to Glenbow's new permanent gallery of the same name, currently in development and scheduled for opening in 2007. Funded by Canadian Culture Online, the *Mavericks* web initiative was also developed to correspond with Alberta school curriculum.

Glenbow Museum is one of Canada's most entrepreneurial museums. Through a variety of dynamic and changing exhibitions and programs along with a broad collection of art, artifacts, and historical documents, Glenbow Museum builds on a commitment to preserve western heritage while simultaneously providing visitors with a glimpse of the world beyond.

The Virtual Museum of Canada (VMC), an initiative of the Department of Canadian Heritage, has worked in collaboration with more than 1,000 museums across the country to promote Canadian cultural content online.

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