

Welcome to the August 2026 edition of the *Tribal Relations Roundup*—your source for the latest news and updates from WisHistory. We appreciate the ongoing collaboration on various projects, initiatives and programs, and we value our relationships with First Nations in Wisconsin and throughout Turtle Island.

Collecting Native Stories for the Wisconsin History Center

Construction on the Wisconsin History Center continued to ramp up this summer, with progress on interior and exterior components, including metal framing, masonry walls, plumbing, and stairs. Behind the scenes, WisHistory staff, consultants, and partners are preparing exhibitions for the center's 2028 opening.

Recognizing that Wisconsin and Great Lakes history and culture are deeply shaped by the Indigenous peoples of this land, WisHistory issued an open call to Native American artists and makers for artwork and powwow, dance, and veteran regalia. The response was incredible, with submissions received from citizens of many Native Nations in Wisconsin or with connections to the state.

Collecting these items provides an opportunity to highlight the makers and the important stories they have to share, while ensuring Native voices and perspectives are represented at the Wisconsin History Center.



A Journey on the Strawberry Trail

Karen Ann Hoffman, of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin, is one of the makers whose artwork will be on display in a 40-foot glass structure showcasing iconic and cultural items from across Wisconsin and First Nations. Her entry is a late 1880s rocking chair, beautifully re-upholstered in black velvet and beaded by hand. The artwork is titled “Singing for Their Dead” and showcases her Haudenosaunee raised beadwork skills.

Haudenosaunee raised beadwork is a Great Lakes Native American art form and cultural hallmark reaching back over 10 thousand years. “First etched into stone and shell, later crafted from moose hair and hide, I now use glass beads and velvet to explore and explain Haudenosaunee world view. It is my joy and responsibility to

deeply understand our culture, translating song, story and dance into raised beadwork," said Hoffman.

The artwork was created in memory of three men important to Hoffman: her husband Mike Hoffman-Cīhkwānahkwa; mentor, relative and friend James F. Frechette, Jr.; and dear friend and teacher Samuel Thomas. Hoffman was taught that the dead travel on the Strawberry Trail, and her beadwork illustrates that story.

On the seat of the chair, the ponds unthaw and the Omahkakowok (frogs) emerge, looking up and singing for those on their journey. Three blossoms bursting with strands of beads adorn the chair's backrest representing the important men from Hoffman's life who have walked on, while the flower without bursting strands represents all of us, poised to one day take the journey.



Dancing the Stories Forward

Dr. James Pete is known as Guyaushk, which means Seagull in Ojibwemowin (Ojibwe language). Guyaushk is a citizen of the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe whose

entry for the Wisconsin History Center's powwow display carries decades of memories.

His Northern Traditional set is made up of moccasins, breech cloth, floral designed vest, deer tail roach headdress, floral cuffs, eagle feather bustle, bone choker, breast plate with matching choker, turtle shield with medicine bag, leggings, a hawk wing fan, a bandolier bag, otter turban, and dance stick. The outfit evolved considerably over 60 years of dancing at powwows and various ceremonies, and includes pieces that were purchased, passed down, gifted and made by himself.

"I thought long and hard about this submission. It represents a way to honor my family, and the many who have shared their knowledge and experience of our traditions and culture," said Guyaushk, who also explained that the Anishinaabe designs incorporated into the regalia are an attempt to capture the leaves, flowers, and animals found in beautiful natural settings.

Guyaushk is a member of the Eagle Clan. With a large family including two sons, 13 grandchildren, and 6 great grandchildren, he sees his contribution to the history center as "another way to encourage people to explore the Traditional, Cultural, Anishinaabemowin, the Teachings of our Elders, as a way to keep these alive for the next 7+ generations."

Read more about Dr. Pete and his regalia in the Ashland Daily Press.

Out and About and Other Happenings

Explore selected highlights from recent First Nations community engagements:

May 1: WisHistory hosted a group from the UW-Green Bay Center for First Nations Education and UW Sea Grant Culture Keepers at the State Archive Preservation Facility in Madison. The visit included a tour of the facility including a look inside the Traditional Care Suite, an opportunity to see the ancient dugout

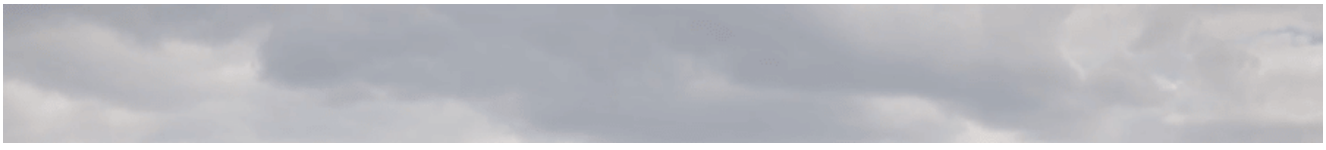
canoes recovered from Lake Mendota, and a showcase of collections related to students' interests.

May 4-5: WisHistory visited the Village of Siren and surrounding area to film with the St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin for the Wisconsin History Center. Filming captured sturgeon restoration efforts of St. Croix's Fish Hatchery along with the talents of some of the finest artists and makers from the community.



St. Croix fish hatchery crew posing for filming.

May 6: Additional filming for the history center, focused on traditional stickball and modern lacrosse, took place at the Indian Community School in Franklin, Wisconsin. WisHistory Tribal Liaison Rachel Byington and the film crew got a hands-on lesson from coaches and Oneida Nation members Mark Denning and Averie Anderson. The group enjoyed a scrimmage game and quickly learned the adults were no match for the kids!





Indian Community School kids prepare for a practice game with Coach Denning and Coach Anderson.

May 14: WisHistory staff attended the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council (GLITC) Board of Directors meeting at the Mole Lake Casino Lodge Event Center in Crandon.

May 15: The 2026 Culture Keepers Convening took place at Lake of the Torches Resort Casino in Waaswaaganing (Lac du Flambeau), Wisconsin. Rachel Byington attended to take part in hands-on learning opportunities including community tours, cultural events, classes, and collaborative planning sessions. Rachel connected with National Museum of American Indians Outreach Specialist Elayne Silversmith who generously gifted a copy of “Water's Edge: The Art of Truman Lowe” and two Winter 2025/Spring 2026 editions of American Indian magazine featuring Truman Lowe, the acclaimed Ho-Chunk artist.

May 17: Brothertown Indian Nation welcomed WisHistory for collaborative media production focused on the musical tradition of shape note singing. Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Courtney Gerzetich organized the day featuring songs from Thomas Commuck’s 1845 collection, “Indian Melodies.”





Brothertown group practicing their songs.

May 21: Filming took place at the Bodwéwadmi Ktëgan (Potawatomi Farm). The farm crew were wonderful hosts. Film crew were able to get up close and personal with the operations and the animals at the farm. Shawn Milligan said, "the Highland cattle are really like big dogs." The day ended with homemade pizza cooked by the fabulous Wenona.

June 3-4: Rachel Byington joined the Great Lakes Native American Elder Association at the Menominee Casino & Resort in Keshena. Wes Martin (Oneida) retired as president and Dr. James Pete (Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe) was elected to the role. Rose Barber (Lac Courte Oreilles) was elected as secretary and Frances Little Wolf (Ho-Chunk Nation) continues as vice president. Elections will be held in September for the treasurer's seat.

June 11: WisHistory attended the Wisconsin Inter-Tribal Repatriation Committee (WITRC) meeting hosted at the Mole Lake Casino Lodge Event Center. THPO Bill Quackenbush (Ho-Chunk Nation) was honored for his retirement. THPO Michael

LaRonge (Sokaogon Chippewa) was elected as WITRC president, THPO Marvin DeFoe (Red Cliff) remains treasurer, and the secretary seat is open.



Back row: Sarah Thompson, Luke Heider, Gavin D'Acquisto, Larry Plucinski, Michael LaRonge. Front row: Marvin DeFoe, Olivia Nunway, Bill Quackenbush, Kyleigh Lightfeather, Karen Washington.

June 25: The Native American Tourism of Wisconsin (NATOW) annual conference took place at the Thornberry Creek at Oneida. Rachel Byington participated in a panel discussion on museums and history centers alongside Milwaukee Public Museum Tribal Liaison James Flores (Oneida), Kahnekano·lú Cultural Center Director Stacey Coon (Oneida), and Kahnekano·lú Cultural Center Registrar Courtney Gerzetich (Oneida & Brothertown). NATOW Director Paul Smith (Oneida) facilitated the panel. Rachel toured the Kahnekano·lú Cultural Center before heading home.

July 19: Community members gathered for a feast honoring the start of the 1854 Treaty Canoe build, led by master canoe builder and Red Cliff Ojibwe Elder Marvin DeFoe. The build is part of Madeline Island Museum's Canoe Journeys program, now in its second year, highlighting Ojibwe history and Big Lake connections to the Apostle Islands, Lake Superior and the relationship with Mooningwanekaaning (Madeline Island). The wiigwaasi-jiimaan (traditional birch bark canoe) honors the 1854 Treaty of LaPointe and will be displayed at the Wisconsin History Center.



A close-up view of the traditional birch bark canoe.

Upcoming Events

James Madison Lecture Series feat. Michael Witgen
Wednesday, Sept. 16 (Green Bay) & Thursday, Sept. 17 (Madison)

European empires established colonies in North America around the idea of “discovering” a so-called New World. In reality, these lands were already home to Native peoples with long histories, governments, and cultures. Witgen’s presentation will explore how the early American republic inherited many of the same ideas and goals as the European empires that came before it. This lecture is FREE and open to the public. Click here to register .

Let’s Eat! Tracing and Preserving Family Food History
Saturday, Nov. 7 (Virtual Event)

There are many ways to explore the past—and yet nothing connects us to our families, histories and cultural roots quite like food. From recipes and ingredients to the stories behind them, food reminds us of who and where we came from. Celebrating family food history and creating new traditions can foster a greater sense of belonging and build shared memories. Explore your own familial and cultural foodways during this unique webinar. Click here to register.

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