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## **Mitchell Museum of the American Indian Announces “Pottery: A Timeless Tradition” Exhibit Opening Saturday, September 19**

September 8, 2015—Mitchell Museum of the American Indian’s newest exhibit, “Pottery: A Timeless Tradition” is opening Saturday, September 19 for a year-long run. Visitors will experience the time-honored pottery making skills and designs that Native American communities have sustained for thousands of years.

“Native American and First Nations peoples have continually utilized and transformed clay into magnificent utilitarian containers for daily and ceremonial uses,” said Janelle Stanley, Curator for Mitchell Museum of the American Indian. ““Pottery: A Timeless Tradition” will look at Native American pottery with a focus on the Southwest, but also feature artists from Alaska, the Great Lakes and Woodlands. Visitors will learn about the artistic process of creating pottery, follow the lineage of three elite pottery making families, and see examples of contemporary interpretations of traditional designs and forms.”

The exhibit begins with a display of five wedding vases from Pueblo tribes. While the use of wedding vases originated in the Southwest, they are now inter-tribal, and are used in contemporary wedding ceremonies in Native communities across the United States.

The artistic process of creating pottery is explained in detail; showing pottery building techniques practiced by indigenous earthenware artists. Even today, gathering clay is a sacred process for many Pueblo tribes. These artists use their reverence of the environment and tactile connection to the clay to continue their ancestor’s pottery traditions today.

The exhibit highlights the time honored pottery traditions of 21 Southwest Pueblo tribes including a large pot by Miriam Davis (Laguna Pueblo), an exquisite example of a Blackware melon jar by Angela Baca (Santa Clara Pueblo), a clay pot by Helen Gachupin (Zia Pueblo), and more.

Visitors will also learn from artists who have begun rediscovering their ancestor's pottery traditions, which have been dormant for the last two hundred years. By delving into tribal and museum collections and consulting with tribal elders, these artists are keeping their culture alive. Exceptional examples include a round bodied pot with a rectangular collar and human faces at each corner, by Jennifer Stevens (Oneida/Lakota), and a gray and black ceramic pot by Jason Weesaw (Potawatomi) among others.

A Pueblo or family's trademark designs are key to the pottery legacies of the Southwest. Visitors will learn about the Martinez (San Ildefonso Pueblo), Nampeyo (Hopi Pueblo) and Chino (Acoma Pueblo) families. These families have elevated the making of pottery in modern times into traditional and contemporary art forms used for ceremonial purposes as well as for the mutual benefit of tourists and collectors.

Finally, contemporary clay sculpture designs highlight the repurposing of clay into a contemporary form and design while keeping traditional elements. Examples from Southwest artists include an owl effigy by Laura Gachupin (Jemez), chicken by Grace Chino (Acoma) and Koshares by Kathleen Wall (Jemez).

The Mitchell Museum is one of only a handful of museums in the country that focuses exclusively on the art, history and culture of American Indian and First Nation peoples throughout the United States and Canada. In 2012, the Mitchell Museum was named "Best Museum of The North Shore: Up and Comer" by *Make it Better* magazine, won the Superior award by the Illinois Association of Museums and was named a national finalist by the American Association of State and Local History award program.

For more information about the Mitchell Museum of The American Indian, visit [www.mitchellmuseum.org](http://www.mitchellmuseum.org) or call 847-475-1030. The museum is open Tuesday-Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Thursday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Sunday noon to 4 p.m. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$3 for seniors, students and children and Free for Mitchell Museum members and Tribal members.

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