



Mitchell Museum focuses on history of American Indian

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After finishing classes for the year at Grinnell College in Iowa, Maya Hobscheid decided to look for a place to volunteer during summer break. During her search, she found a "gem" tucked away in Evanston's northwest corner.

Since June, Hobscheid has volunteered at the Mitchell Museum of the American Indian, located at 3001 Central St.

"Since I've been here, I've met many of the board members. It's just a great place to work," she said.

As a part-time volunteer, Hobscheid mans the front desk, greeting visitors and offering assistance when possible. She also spends some of her time preparing materials for craft classes.

The museum started in 1977 when Betty Seabury Mitchell and her husband John Mayo donated a collection of about 3,000 Native American objects to Kendall College. In 2006, the museum separated from the college and became an independent nonprofit organization

"When Kendall College switched its focus to become more of a culinary school, the museum separated," said Kathleen McDonald, the museum's Executive Director.

McDonald said the overall mission of the museum is to promote and share a



By Trevor Seela / The Summer Northwestern

deeper understanding of Native American culture. To meet this mission, the museum has a permanent exhibit on the first floor divided up in to sections for each region of Native American tribes. The museum also has a non-permanent exhibit in their second floor.

The exhibit currently featured in the second-floor gallery is titled "Dazzling Colors: The Evolution of Plains Reservation Art." The exhibit seeks to explore the history of reservations and how, throughout various legislation by the government, land allocated for reservations diminished.

According to the exhibit, Native American art was forced to evolve during the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad—when the population of buffalo, their main source of craft material, significantly decreased. For example, before buffalo hide became scarce, artists would paint on hides. After, they began using pages from ledger books as a canvas.

The second level of the museum is also home to a "teaching lodge." The teaching lodge is a place where children can take a closer look and have a hands-on experience with various Native American objects.

"We see a lot of people come in to the museum. There are visitors from all across the states and from overseas. There are also members that come in on a regular basis. Parents bring their children, too—we're very family friendly," McDonald said.

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