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Mitchell Museum of the American Indian Celebrates the History of Native American Fashion with “Native Haute Couture” Opening January 31

January 15, 2015—The Mitchell Museum of the American Indian is pleased to announce the opening of its new exhibit “Native Haute Couture” on January 31. The year-long exhibit celebrates the history of Native American high fashion from pre-contact to today. It features unique and priceless garments that showcase American Indian artistry and expertise in tanning, weaving, embroidery, beadwork and tailoring. From ceremonies and pow wows, to celebrations and fashion runways, Native Americans have always had a sense of high fashion and adornment.

Prior to European contact, Native Americans used established indigenous trade routes throughout North and Central America to trade copper, prized dyed quills, carved bones and drilled and carved shells to embellish custom clothing. Native American artisans embraced and shaped new and exotic materials to create unique designs including South American macaw feathers and European glass beads as well as European techniques for crafting silver and sewing.

“Native Haute Couture” will feature exquisite examples of late 19th and early 20th century garments and accessories from tribes across the United States and Canada. These pieces reflect the incorporation of many European influenced trade goods and designs in traditional Native dress. Among the items on display are a Cheyenne dress from ca. 1915 made of elk skin with a beaded yolk in a geometric design, a Cheyenne child’s dress from the 1950s that is navy piped with red ribbon, and a signature scarf from “Project Runway” finalist Patricia Michaels (Taos Pueblo).

Even during painful historical periods of forced assimilation, including the beginning of the Reservation and Boarding School eras, Native people still found small accessories and embellishments to sustain their cultural connections while wearing Western clothing. With the popularity of American Indian designs non-Native designers created copycat products. Today, Native artists and tribes are fighting back to claim ownership and authenticity of their traditional designs and heritage, and modern indigenous designers are taking their well-deserved spotlight on fashion runways with designs still reflecting their tribal connection with artistic stitches.

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 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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