

# Interior



# Shelves

## *People, Land and Water Opens at the Interior Museum*

*By Tracy Baetz, Interior Museum*

The Department of the Interior is among the nation's oldest federal agencies. Couple that with managing an incredibly diverse portfolio, and it's easy to see why DOI can be complicated to explain—even for long-time employees. This was the challenge that the Interior Museum tackled in conceptualizing an update to its reconfigured gallery space. More than four years of planning involved collaboration, input and materials from nearly 100 stakeholders across DOI and beyond.

The result? *People, Land & Water*, a semi-permanent installation, opened to the public on June 12, 2017. This new visitor experience introduces audiences to the scope and influence of the Department, past and present. Broad interpretive themes of *Discovering*, *Protecting*, *A Land of Many Nations*, *Contemporary Cultures*, and *Powering our Future* provide a framework for understanding the interconnectivity among DOI's bureaus, as well as the projects in which our 70,000 employees are engaged nationally and internationally. Eighty-eight objects—from American Indian basketry and historical documents to scientific instruments and even a fossilized dinosaur bone—draw primarily from the Interior Museum's collection but also include artifacts on loan from other bureaus. An inspiring 14-minute orientation film and educational multimedia presentations actively engage the public with the Department's history, missions and relevance. Finally, a timeline of DOI as the "Department of Everything Else" explores the interplay with milestone U.S. events and legislation.

The Interior Museum is located on the first floor of Washington, D.C.'s Stewart Lee Udall Department of the Interior Building. The museum is free and open to the public on weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. In the new gallery's first three months, the museum has welcomed over 3,200 people from 31 states and five foreign countries. Responses have been positive, with many visitors leaving comments and reminiscences in the guestbook. One recent visitor wrote, "This was a very informative museum. It gave us a better understanding of what the DOI does."

For more information visit:

<https://www.doi.gov/interiormuseum/exhibitions>



Views of the Interior Museum's newly-renovated 700 square-foot gallery space.

# The American Bison: A National Symbol

## Interior Museum Program

Over millennia, the American Bison, *Bison bison*, has represented pride and power. Many Native American art and artifacts in DOI bureau collections use bison imagery to depict sacred life and abundance, while some American settlers used the bison as a symbol of expansion and Manifest Destiny. To illustrate the diversity of museum objects associated with bison in DOI bureau collections, the Interior Museum Program designed an online exhibit in collaboration with Google Arts and Culture. The exhibit begins with bison discovered on DOI public lands in the paleontological and archeological records, then explores the bison in history, Native American life, American art, and at the Department.

The divergence of the bison from water buffalo occurred 2-5 million years ago. Fossils of ancestral bison, *Bison latifrons*, are found across DOI lands, one of which was reconstructed, 3-D scanned, and included in the exhibit (Bureau of Reclamation). For thousands of years, Native Americans hunted bison for their thick coats and abundant meat. Bison bones, many with tool marks, and the butchering tools used by Native Americans have been found at many archeological sites (Bureau of Land Management). Also on exhibit are Native American objects made from bison, including a coat, a teepee, an elaborate headdress, pouches, and a hide drum (National Park Service, Indian Arts and Crafts Board).

The first written record of the American bison was in 1625, when millions roamed through North America. Despite the huge decline in populations during the 1800s, the impressive bison has been utilized in many ways: represented on stamps and currency, like the buffalo nickel and 1901 \$10 "Bison Note" (Interior Museum); stylized for the DOI seal (Interior Museum); and silhouetted on the National Park Service Arrowhead (Interior Museum, NPS); and in dramatic artwork (Interior Museum, NPS). In 2016, bison were designated the U.S. national mammal as an embodiment of the first successful foray into wildlife conservation (Fish and Wildlife Service). The museum objects in the online exhibit managed by DOI bureaus and their partners serve as a reminder of the impact that the American Bison has had over time and across the United States.

Visit the exhibit at: <https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/partner/us-department-of-the-interior-museum-program>



Big Medicine (right), the albino bison who led the herd at FWS's National Bison Range in Moiese, MT, alongside a brown bison.

## Public Engagement Online

By Annie Pardo, Museum, Bureau of Indian Affairs

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) is steward to a museum collection of nearly eight million objects. This collection reflects and preserves the history of the BIA, Indian schools, and American Indian and Alaska Native culture. BIA museum collections are located in 155 repositories throughout the United States.

To present a cohesive overview of BIA's artwork and ethnographic objects, and make BIA collections accessible to a wider audience, BIA partnered with Google Arts & Culture. BIA curators conducted research,



Indians, painting by Cherokee artist, Lloyd Henri "Kiva" New, 1973

wrote interpretive text, completed new photography of more than 100 objects, and developed ten online exhibits. Google launched BIA's exhibits during Native American Heritage Month in November 2016.

Featured among BIA's online exhibits are Native American woodcarvers and artists from the Southeastern culture group – including Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole – who demonstrate a shift away from more traditional styles and an embracing of contemporary artistic trends while maintaining their Native perspectives.

Another exhibit focuses on gift giving, which plays an important role in Native culture and in BIA's museum collections which are replete with gifts from tribal leaders and Native artists. BIA developed an exhibit showcasing a selection of gifts that have been given to BIA senior leaders and employees over the years. Finally, BIA highlighted several well-known Native artists that are represented in BIA collections including Fritz Scholder and Allan Houser. BIA will continue developing its online exhibits in the future: <https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/partner/bureau-of-indian-affairs>



Wooden Bear, cherry wood carving by Cherokee artist, Amanda Crowe

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[www.doi.gov/museum](http://www.doi.gov/museum)