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Rare Historical Documents on View at FAM

OKLAHOMA CITY (March 22, 2023)– First Americans Museum (FAM) and the University of Oklahoma Law School Library presents *200 Years of Doctrine of Discovery: Johnson v. M’Intosh and the Indian Removal Act*. The pop-up exhibit, featuring historical documents never shown publicly, will be on view March 10–Aug. 31, 2023, in the Tribal Nations Gallery.

“This exhibit includes historic documents that informed the U. S. Supreme Court decision establishing the Doctrine of Discovery and the legal foundation for the Indian Removal Act,” said Dr. heather ahtone (Choctaw/Chickasaw Nation), FAM Director of Curatorial Affairs. “In addition, the exhibit promotes the history of the Peoria and Chickasaw Nations as critical to U.S. history and provides an introduction to federal Indian law.”

The 1823 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Johnson v. M’Intosh* established the principle for the U.S. to claim ownership of any “discovered” lands, diminishing the rights of First Americans. The law remains in effect and continues to impact tribal-federal relationships, according to ahtone. “The exhibition shares the relevance of history as a contemporary issue.”

“As the document custodians for the Brinton family of Pennsylvania, the University of Oklahoma College of Law Library is proud and pleased to assist in displaying pieces of the historical narrative surrounding *Johnson v. M’Intosh*,” said Kenton Brice, Interim Director, OU Law Library. “Many thanks to Jasper Brinton and the Brinton family of Pennsylvania, Professor Lindsay Robertson, and the FAM staff in making these important documents public for the first time.”

United States Justice John Marshall used the concept of the Doctrine of Discovery to resolve land disputes following the Revolutionary War. The land in question belonged to the Piankeshaw and Kaskaskia Nations and the ownership was being claimed by opposing



parties. By applying the concept of Doctrine of Discovery, Marshall held that the U.S. inherited the land from European nations after the war and that tribal land sales can only be facilitated through the federal government. Following removal, the Piankeshaw and Kaskaskia joined with other Illinois/Indiana allied tribes to become the Peoria Tribe. Through its implementation, the decision has become established federal law and governs relationships between the US and Tribes today.

Public programs are being developed for the summer. Visit www.famok.org for details.

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About First Americans Museum

The mission of FAM is to educate the broader public about the unique cultures, diversity, history, and contributions of the 39 Tribal Nations in Oklahoma today. The 175,000 square foot facility showcases state-of-the-art exhibitions in history, culture, and art; live public and education programs; a full-service restaurant presenting unique Native inspired cuisine; and a museum store featuring one-of-a-kind hand-made items created by Oklahoma's premier Native American artists.