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FAM Curatorial Affairs team reengages WINIKO: Reunion research.

OKLAHOMA CITY (August 14, 2023) – First Americans Museum (FAM) Curatorial Affairs department is meeting with tribal communities across Oklahoma to reconnect families with items on loan from the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian. The beginning phases of this research started during the preparatory research and developing work related to the opening of FAM, but was interrupted by the pandemic.

The award winning exhibition WINIKO: Life of an Object: Selections from the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian presents 135 objects on loan from the national collection. FAM seeks to create reunions for these objects with the tribal communities, knowledge holders, and descendant families.

Director of Curatorial Affairs, heather ahtone described, “The research to enact reunions as part of our exhibition development for WINIKO was incredibly powerful for us and the families. We appreciate the support of the National Museum of the American Indian, the Ford Foundation, and the Luce Foundation. With their support for our vision, we believe we can make a difference for the families and the museums, expanding what is known and understood about the objects in our temporary care.”

The project is made possible with the help of funding from multiple organizations. The Ford Foundation awarded FAM with a $250,000 grant to support research related to reunion efforts, including several research positions and related travel costs for families. Additionally, the Henry Luce Foundation has awarded $225,000 to support the research, enhance the current gallery experience for the related film, and to support the production of a publication and feature length film to document the current work.

The Curatorial Affairs team began consultations with tribal communities across Oklahoma during the summer of 2023. This research will continue through 2024. Upon completion of the research, FAM will produce a book and feature length film to share the stories the emerge from this work.

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About First Americans Museum
FAM’s mission 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 shop featuring one-of-a-kind hand-made items created by Oklahoma’s premier Native American artists.