The Precious Things We Share: The Past, Present, and Future of Indigenous Picture Book Art



Garry Meeches Sr. (Anishinaabe), Illustration for *Keepunumuk: Weeâchumun's Thanksgiving Story* by Danielle Greendeer (Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe), Anthony Perry (Chickasaw Nation), and Alexis Bunten (Aleut/Yup'ik). Courtesy of Erin Lamb-Meeches. © 2022 Garry Meeches Sr.

Organized by

THE ERIC CARLE MUSEUM OF PICTURE BOOK ART

Amherst, MA

Guest Curator Dr. Lee Francis IV (Laguna Pueblo) and
Co-Curator Eleanor Owl Stolzoff (Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians)

The Precious Things We Share: Indigenous Art, Past, Present, and Future

A landmark traveling exhibition celebrating more than 200 years of Indigenous storytelling through picture book art.

The Precious Things We Share is the first major traveling exhibition to celebrate the rich artistic legacy of Indigenous picture book art across what is now the United States and Canada. Named for the Nipmuc phrase Wáanegugish "the precious things we share," the exhibition traces more than 200 years of Indigenous storytelling, visual culture, and publishing history through more than 80 original works of art, books, and cultural objects. *The Precious Things We Share* will be on view at The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art January 16 - June 20, 2027.

EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

Through original illustrations, rare books, contemporary artwork, and objects of material culture, visitors discover how Indigenous artists have preserved, adapted, and expanded storytelling traditions across generations. Rather than presenting Indigenous art as history alone, *The Precious Things We Share* highlights a vibrant, living tradition that continues to shape contemporary children's literature and visual culture.

The exhibition is organized into four thematic sections:

Since Time Immemorial: Explores Indigenous storytelling traditions before European contact through contemporary works inspired by pottery, beadwork, weaving, carving, wampum, and other cultural practices.

Early Books: Presents picture books created by Indigenous authors and artists during the early twentieth century, illuminating pioneering voices in children's publishing.

The Rise of Illustrative Natives: Celebrates today's acclaimed Indigenous picture book artists whose work has transformed children's literature over the past several decades.

The Seventh Generation: Introduces emerging Native artists whose stories and artistic visions are shaping the future of picture books for generations to come.



SD Nelson (Standing Rock Sioux), Illustration for *Greet the Dawn: The Lakota Way.* Courtesy of the State Historical Society of North Dakota 2021.41.134. © 2012 SD Nelson.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Features more than 80 original illustrations, books, paintings, photographs, and cultural objects.
- Represents over 40 Indigenous artists from over 100 tribes across what is now United States, Canada, and Turtle Island.
- Spans more than 250 years of Indigenous artistic and publishing history.
- Guided throughout its development by an Indigenous Advisory Committee.
- Includes original interviews with participating artists and authors, providing visitors with first-person perspectives on their creative process and cultural traditions. Borrowing institutions receive the digital media; recommended equipment specifications for gallery presentation are provided.

Why This Exhibition Matters

The Precious Things We Share offers museums an extraordinary opportunity to present an exhibition that is both historically significant and deeply relevant to contemporary audiences. By centering Indigenous voices and artistic leadership, the exhibition fosters dialogue about storytelling, identity, resilience, and cultural continuity while celebrating the remarkable contributions Indigenous artists continue to make to picture books and the visual arts.

Ideal for art museums, children's museums, university museums, history museums, libraries, and cultural institutions, *The Precious Things We Share* offers broad appeal for families, educators, scholars, and lifelong learners through an engaging and visually-stunning presentation of one of North America's richest artistic traditions.

Tour Information

- Tour Fee: $50,000 plus outbound and return shipping, fine arts insurance, and crating.
- Space Requirements: Approximately 2,500–3,000 square feet (flexible depending on gallery configuration).
- Available: Beginning Fall 2027

Exhibition Includes:

- More than 80 original works plus additional born-digital works, rare books, and cultural objects.
- Introductory and section text panels.
- Digital files of four artist/author interviews (venues provide playback equipment).
- Exhibition checklist and interpretive materials.
- Programming Opportunities: Artist talks, educator workshops, family programs, Indigenous storytelling, school tours, and community partnerships can be tailored by the borrowing institution.

Project Advisors:

Lee Francis 4 (Laguna Pueblo)
Chag Lowery (Yurok, Maidu, and Achumawi)
Dr. Hollie Mackey (Northern Cheyenne)
Cynthia Leitich Smith (Muscogee)
Brittany Schulman (Waccamaw Siouan)
Larry Spotted Crow Mann (Hassanamisco Nipmuc)
Raven Dial Stanley (Lumbee)
Dr. Kiara M. Vigil (Dakota ancestry)



Aphelandra (Oneida Nation of Wisconsin), Illustration for *Shaped by Her Hands: Potter María Martínez* by Barbara Gonzales (San Ildefonso Pueblo) and Anna Harber Freeman (Osage Nation). Courtesy of Aphelandra. © 2021 Aphelandra Messer.

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