



Oct. 1, 2008

Media only: Leonda Levchuk (202) 633-6613; levchukl@si.edu
Ann Marie Sekeres (212) 514-3823; sekeresa@si.edu

Media Web site: <http://newsdesk.si.edu>

“Through the Eyes of the Eagle: Illustrating Healthy Living for Children” Exhibition Opens at the National Museum of the American Indian

The Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian, in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, will present original illustrations by Patrick Rolo (Bad River Band of Ojibwe, Wisconsin) and Lisa A. Fifield (Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin, Black Bear Clan). “Through the Eyes of the Eagle: Illustrating Healthy Living for Children” opens Oct. 3, both at the museum on the National Mall and at the George Gustav Heye Center in New York City.

The exhibition features the original artwork used for the vibrant illustrations in the Eagle Books, a four-book series written by Georgia Perez, a community health representative who lives in Nambe Pueblo in New Mexico. Developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Division of Diabetes Translation in collaboration with the Tribal Leaders Diabetes Committee and the Indian Health Service, the books foster awareness about the importance of healthy eating and physical activity for diabetes prevention.

The stories continue traditional Native American storytelling practices, while addressing a relevant issue in today’s society. Wise animal characters and a clever trickster coyote are featured in the books and engage the lead character, Rain That Dances, and his friends in the joy of physical activity and healthy eating. Illustrations from two books in the series, “Through the Eyes of the Eagle” and “Plate Full of Color,” will be showcased at the National Museum of the American Indian on the National Mall, while the George Gustav Heye Center will highlight the images from the other two books in the series, “Knees Lifted High” and “Tricky Treats.” The exhibition is the first to be featured in the newly remodeled second-level Works on Paper Gallery at the Washington, D.C., museum. The exhibition will close on Jan. 4, 2009, in both locations.

“Through the Eyes of the Eagle: Illustrating Healthy Living for Children” reflects the museum’s commitment to addressing contemporary Native issues through the arts. “Never before has the museum featured an exhibition that educates visitors about current health issues faced by Native

American communities,” said Kevin Gover (Pawnee/Comanche), director of the National Museum of the American Indian. “We believe that ‘Through the Eyes of the Eagle’ will help bring attention to these alarming health trends.”

According to the Division of Diabetes Translation, American Indians and Alaska Natives are disproportionately affected by diabetes. The data show that American Indians 15-19 years old are more likely to develop type 2 diabetes than other ethnic groups. The division has established many programs and initiatives to help American Indians and Alaska Natives manage and prevent diabetes. They also fund 11 tribal nations, urban Indian programs and tribal colleges and universities.

“We’re excited about the Eagle Books because they make health education fun for young Native children and everyone interested in healthy living,” said Dr. Ann Albright, CDC’s director of the Division of Diabetes Translation. “The Eagle Books have been well-received in Indian Country and this partnership with the National Museum of the American Indian allows us to expand the reach of these critical health messages.”

Established in 1989 through an Act of Congress, the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian is an institution of living cultures dedicated to advancing knowledge and understanding of the life, languages, literature, history and arts of the Native peoples of the Western Hemisphere. The museum includes the National Museum of the American Indian on the National Mall; the George Gustav Heye Center, a permanent museum in lower Manhattan; and the Cultural Resources Center, a research and collections facility in Suitland, Md.

###