

Native American Exhibit Concept Strategic Plan 2018 (December 13, 2019)

The Besser Museum will engage in a multi-layered approach to developing the content needed to create the narrative for the Native American exhibit.

1. The Museum will work with a professional genealogist who will research the Native American families who lived and who are living in Northeast Michigan. The genealogist will produce documentation showing what is commonly known as a family tree. The genealogist will also provide the Museum with names and contact information of all individuals identified during the research. The Museum will pursue interviewing the individuals who have been identified. The Museum will work with skilled journalists, research/writers, and/or professional videographers to capture the stories of these individuals. This information will become part of the permanent collections at the Museum. Some of the stories will be incorporated into the Native American exhibit gallery.
 - a. To date, the genealogist that the museum hired has compiled a lot of information on several prominent Native American families who lived in and around the Alpena area (Hubbard Lake, Mikado, Oscoda). Research is ongoing as more photos, artifacts, and stories are being discovered.
 - b. The Besser Museum captured an interview with the LeBlance family. The LeBlance's are a Native American commercial fishing family. The videographer also went out on the fish tug to capture footage. We have also scanned several photo albums. All this will be used to create a documentary video presentation for the museum.
 - c. The Besser Museum has also captured a video oral history.
2. The Museum will work with professional historians to develop the narrative of the historical accountants of European contact. The focus will be on the relationships that developed from each contact of the French, British, and American governments. This will also include the impact of Treaties, Reservations and Boarding Schools.
 - a. Currently, the Besser Museum is working with a local historian on the French fur trading story.
3. The Museum will work with professional archaeologist to develop a narrative describing the sequential development of prehistoric artifacts that represents the eras known as Paleo, Archaic, Woodland and Historic Cultural Periods. The archaeologists will also help explain the geomorphological changes to the environment with emphasis on the changing lake levels in this region over the past 8,000 years.
 - a. The Besser Museum has some information but needs to do more work in this area.
4. The Museum will work with professional biologist/environmentalists to develop a narrative describing the use of sustainable natural resources, specially pertaining to the historic cultural lifeways of Native Americans.

- a. The Besser Museum has read several books on this topic and is planning on contacting one of the authors to gain more information and possible permission to use section of the book for the exhibit labels.
 - b. The Besser Museum has contacted a representative from GLIFWC to discuss environmental topics. We need to follow up with this contact.
 - c. More research is needed in this area.
5. The Museum will work with members of Native American Indian tribes within Northern Michigan to develop a narrative describing native cultural lifeways and heritage in an authentic voice, from prehistory to present. This will include the topics/themes mentioned in all the steps of this strategic outline: genealogy, history, archaeology, biology, and exhibit design.
 - a. The Besser Museum is hiring Native American professionals to review all the research gathered and to help develop thematic narratives for the exhibit.
 - b. The Besser Museum has visited with several tribal historians throughout Michigan who have agreed to review the content as it is being developed.
6. The Museum will work with Good Design Group to develop an exhibit design plan that weaves together the multiple layers of narrative content and historical perspectives in a way that both enlightens and/or challenges visitors' knowledge or understanding of Native American heritage.
 - a. The Besser Museum has a first draft of what the gallery could possible look like. More work needs to be done as the exhibit develops.
 - b. The Native American professionals hired to review and develop narratives will be hired to assist in exhibit development when we get to that phase.