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Long Island Children's Museum Receives NEA Grant To Support Indigenous Artist Residency Summer Exhibit

Garden City, NY – Long Island Children's Museum has been approved for a *Grants for Arts Projects award* from the National Endowment for the Arts to support its summer Artist in Residency exhibit, "Toyuskanash: Bridges." (*Toyuskanash* is the Algonquian word for Bridges.)

This dynamic exhibition will bring four Indigenous artists from the Shinnecock Nation together with LICM visitors to *view, talk about* and *make art* during a two-month exhibition. More than 30 artist residency workshops will be offered for Museum visitors; introducing them to both the creative process and medium used by each artist featured in the exhibit and explore the stories art presents to viewers.

Complementary exhibitions at *Ma's House & BIPOC Art Studio* on the Shinnecock Indian Reservation in Southampton, NY, will introduce the work of BIPOC artists and encourage visitation between the two sites covering both Nassau and Suffolk counties.

"Toyuskanash: Bridges" will feature the artwork of fine art photographer **Jeremy Dennis**, painter and tradition bearer **Denise Silva-Dennis**, beadwork appliqué and ribbon work artist **Tohanash Tarrant** and painter **David Bunn Martine**. The exhibit has been co-curated by Dennis and Silva-Dennis alongside LICM Director of Exhibits **Erik Schurink** and LICM Associate Director of Education **Jeanmarie Walsh Mansfield**. Artists featured at Ma's House during the summer include **Simone Johnson** and **Sonomi Kobayashi**

Art exhibitions, by their nature, tell a story – from the selection of pieces, how they are grouped and placed, and of course, which artists are on view. In this co-curation, artists selected others to join them to tell a collaborative story. Artists represent different generations and use different media but share a culture and commitment to celebrating traditions in a contemporary context.

"The concept of 'Bridges' represented in the title is a metaphor for bringing people together over difficult or impossible terrain," explains Jeremy Dennis. "In the case of Indigenous people and artists, we often have to bridge gaps in empathy, understanding, and knowledge."

The generational representation of artists aligns with the Children's Museum's audience; children accompanied by parents, grandparents and teachers for shared learning experiences. The generational connection in this exhibit is further represented with the participation of a mother and son -- artists Denise Silva-Dennis and Jeremy Dennis.

"We are grateful that the National Endowment of the Arts has selected to support Long Island Children's Museum again as we bring a dynamic art experience to the community," said LICM President Suzanne LeBlanc. "Our summer exhibit provides opportunities for visitors to view and make art as they work alongside Indigenous artists, explore the stories told through these artists work and make connections to their own stories and places on Long Island."

Visitors entering the Museum this summer will be immediately introduced to the art makers through images of each artist and highlighted pieces of their work. Jeremy Dennis' interactive map, showcasing culturally significant Native American sites on Long Island, enables visitors to gain an understanding of place as they explore their hometowns. LICM's KaleidoZone gallery will display the art of all four artists, while its traveling exhibit gallery will be the setting for the artist-led workshops and an open area for art making throughout the summer. This space will include works by each artist highlighting their artistic approach. A storytelling area in this space will share the legend of "Sky Woman," the Indigenous creation story.

Artist Residency Schedules

Each artist's creative process will be highlighted during two-week residencies at the Museum; including eight artist-led workshops and daily activities for visitors led by Museum staff that draw inspiration from their artwork, process and media.

July 5-17: Denise Silva-Dennis

July 18-31: Tohanash Tarrant

August 1-14: David Bunn Martine

August 15-28: Jeremy Dennis

During the month of July, the four artists will be working on a collaborative art piece focused on the theme of the medicine wheel, a powerful symbol of interconnectivity. On Saturday, July 23, visitors will have the opportunity to add to the collaborative piece, which will be on display in the art-making space for the remainder of the exhibit.

An additional aspect of the summer exhibit will be a **Talk Back Wall** allowing visitors to respond to questions about the concepts of place, identity, history and land. Questions will be refreshed throughout the eight-week exhibit. LICM is grateful for the support of Humanities New York for this element of the summer exhibit.

"The National Endowment for the Arts is proud to support arts and cultural organizations throughout the nation with these grants, including Long Island Children's Museum, providing opportunities for all of us to live artful lives," said NEA Chair Maria Rosario Jackson, PhD. "The arts contribute to our individual well-being, the well-being of our communities, and to our local economies. The arts are also crucial to helping us make sense of our circumstances from different perspectives as we emerge from the pandemic and plan for a shared new normal informed by our examined experience."

About the Long Island Children's Museum

The mission of Long Island Children's Museum is to connect all our communities' children, and those who care for them, to a life of wonder, imagination and exploration. At LICM, children discover their passions and their relationship to the world we share. The 40,000 square-foot museum welcomes nearly 275,000 children and annually. The private, not-for-profit institution chartered by the New York State Board of Regents, offers museum-based educational programs and cultural experiences, as well as an extensive community outreach program offered in schools, libraries and youth centers across Long Island.

LICM is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), recognized as the field's gold standard for museum excellence and signifies a museum's quality, credibility and its deep commitment to mission and community. Less than 3% of the nation's more than 30,000 museums have earned this recognition. LICM is currently the only children's museum in NY State, and just one of 16 nationwide, to achieve accreditation.

The Museum is the recipient of the 2012 National Medal for Museum & Library Service, the highest honor conferred on museums for extraordinary civic, educational, economic, environmental, and social contributions.