

Opening of the New Indian Museum in Washington D.C.

After 15 years of research in all Indian centres of the two Americas, the doors of the Smithsonian Indian Museum were finally opened in Washington D.C., on Sept. 2nd. A beautiful piece of Architecture, attributed to an Indian from Alberta. By contrast with the others museums in the capital, this one is in modern style and really fits the spirit of the Indians of today.

On Tuesday morning, a crowd of about 9000 Indians from everywhere in the western hemisphere, even from New Zealand, paraded in their colorful head gears and costumes. 44 chiefs accompanied them. Many Indians wore a Kateri button given out by Sr. Kateri Mitchell SSA; others had just received a holy picture of Kateri, gift of Mgr P. Lenz. After a few speeches which gave the fashion of the ceremony, the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution gave the key of the "cathedral" to the Museum director, Chief Richard West, from Oklahoma. He then invited all those present, brothers and sisters Indians to "enter their home." This monument erected on the National Mall in front of the Capitol thus belongs to the Indians who will welcome in their turn all the Americans and visitors of the world. They expect to receive up to 4 millions visitors a year.

What is this place? "It's a building on the Mall with a lot of cool things to see. But it's also a \$219 million clubhouse, a Cathedral, a memorial, a political statement, a poke in the eye to science and, oh yes, a food court and a garden with a message. It's Indian country with it's own rules."

At the centre of the atrium, is an immense white marble circle, which symbolizes the circle of life. Leaving the atrium, we face a very large disc of red cedar painted by Suzan Point, from Vancouver B.C. It's a gift of the Canadian government. It's on the third and fourth levels that we find booths depicting a few tribes, namely the inhabitants of Kahnawake. The art of the steel workers is very well exposed as well as the excellence of the athletes in the world of sports.

You cannot expect to see the history of the Indian tribes in this museum. It is not a museum of anthropology. It's a museum of living cultures.

A kind of Indian modernism. What are the Indians of today. We see them making kayaks, canoes, totems poles and cooking today.

At every level, and there are five of them, there are theatres where you can visualize the cultures and traditions of the Indians. They still have to decide what names of famous Indians will be inscribed on the Honour Wall. We have received the assurance that the name of Kateri Tekakwitha will be carved with that of grand Chiefs and Indian heroes.

J. Bruyère s.j.

Two special promoters

Mrs. Marlene McCauley and Mrs. Anne Scheuerman are those two zealous promoters of Kateri's Cause, though Blessed Kateri is also present in the daily life of many other devotees.

Early this year, Marlene organized the "Mary's Crown Pilgrimage". 41 pilgrims participated and visited together the Shrines of Fatima, Lourdes, Loyola, Santiago de Compostello, Medjugorie. Not only this pilgrimage was under the Patronage of Blessed Kateri Tekawitha, but the Kateri banner was a part of each mass and procession. Kateri's holy cards were left everywhere. Many a time did the pilgrims along with Allan and Marlene recited the special prayer to obtain Kateri's canonization. Marlene was also in Washington D.C. with her painting of Kateri and the children of the world to join in the parade at the opening of the new, Indian Museum. Thank you, Marlene and Allan!

Ann Scheuerman, the official photographer of Kateri's Cause, was in Washington also with Sr Kateri Mitchell SSA to join in the opening parade of the New Indian Museum.

So was Mgr Paul Lenz, the director of the U.S. Indian Catholic Missions. Together they passed out 3000 prayer cards and 2000 Kateri badges. Watching the parade was at least 50,000 visitors from all over, this unique parade being so colorful and meaningful. Mrs. Scheuerman mingling with crowd took the loveliest photos of this greatest event of the year!

Thanks to Mrs. Scheuerman for assuring all of Kateri's friends that her name would be engraved like many other famous Indians, on the Honour wall.

J.B.

