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## **The Mitchell Museum of the American Indian Rebrands as the Gichigamiin Indigenous Nations Museum: A New Era Focused on Indigenous Communities of Chicago and the Great Lakes Region**

**Evanston, Illinois (November 21, 2024)** – The Mitchell Museum of the American Indian is proud to announce its rebranding as the Gichigamiin Indigenous Nations Museum, marking a transformative milestone in its 47-year history. This new identity follows the museum's evolution into a majority Native-led institution dedicated to honoring Indigenous communities' diverse histories, cultures, and languages across Chicago and the Great Lakes region.

The museum name "Gichigamiin" means "Great Lakes" in Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe), a central Algonquin language spoken by the Anishinaabe people throughout the states and provinces surrounding the Great Lakes. Pronounced /GI-CHE-GAH-MEAN/, the name was carefully chosen in collaboration with the local Indigenous communities to ensure it authentically reflects the region the museum represents.

"The new name not only grounds the museum geographically, it signifies an essential step in reclaiming and revitalizing Indigenous languages and cultures," said Kim Vigue (*Menominee/Oneida*) Executive Director. "By embracing an Indigenous name, we honor the remarkable resilience of the generations before us who courageously faced assimilation efforts aimed at silencing their voices and traditions. This rebranding marks a significant step toward healing and celebrating the Indigenous histories of the Great Lakes region and the vibrant cultures that continue to thrive today."

The rebranding process was fueled by extensive community involvement and driven by Bumper Lanes, a Native women-owned marketing firm. Over nine months, engagement efforts included surveys and focus groups with the Indigenous community, museum members and partners, and the public. Feedback from nearly 700 participants highlighted a broad consensus supporting a new identity that mirrors the values and languages of the Indigenous peoples in the region.

"As we step into this new era, we are honored to share the stories and traditions of Chicago's diverse Native community and the Indigenous Nations of the Great Lakes. Our museum will serve as a unique venue and vital resource for education, appreciation, and

connection, inviting all to experience the depth and richness of the people who have occupied this land since time immemorial," stated Andrew Johnson (*Cherokee Nation*), Board Treasurer.

Graphic artist Crystal Mzhickteno, a Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation citizen, designed the new logo. The design features a Woodland floral motif and ribbon work in shades of blue and green, along with visual elements that highlight the cultural significance of the Great Lakes and reflect the region's natural environment.

To further its commitment to amplifying Native voices and narratives of the Great Lakes, the Gichigamiin Indigenous Nations Museum will introduce two exciting programs: "Living Stories: Contemporary Woodland Native American Art," an exhibition opening on January 27, 2025, and the "Indigenous Gardening and Foodways Initiative," which will feature an expanded native garden, a teaching kitchen, and a related exhibit set to launch in spring 2025.

For more information about our rebranding journey and upcoming exhibitions, please visit [www.gichigamiin-museum.org](http://www.gichigamiin-museum.org).

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### **About the Gichigamiin Indigenous Nations Museum**

The Gichigamiin Indigenous Nations Museum in Evanston, IL, celebrates and shares the cultures of Native communities, especially those from the Great Lakes region. Formerly called the Mitchell Museum of the American Indian, it has been an essential resource since 1977. The museum aims to amplify Native voices and improve public understanding and respect for Indigenous knowledge, history, and contemporary contributions. The Gichigamiin Indigenous Nations Museum promotes awareness and appreciation of Indigenous cultures through engaging educational programs, advocacy initiatives, and community involvement.