Before it was the “West,” this land was home to millions. Focusing on the land and its people, students will explore Native American artistic traditions, rich with symbolism. Many Plains Indian tribes were nomadic, traveling the Great Plains following food sources. A nomadic lifestyle required moving all personal belongings throughout the year. Plains Tribes created inventive and functional ways to store, pack, and transport their personal belongings. Students will explore the nomadic lifestyle of the American Indian in the West.

The Plains Indians’ nomadic lifestyle was changed by their interactions with Europeans and the introduction of the horse to North America.

Grades: K-3
Length of Tour: 60 minutes
Student Capacity: approximately 15 students per docent
Subjects: Visual Arts, History, Social Studies

By participating in this program, students will be able to:
1. Identify how American Indian cultures carried and transported materials.
2. Analyze how Plains Indian tribes utilized materials from the environment to create material culture items.
3. Compare and contrast historic/traditional American Indian materials with contemporary objects.
4. Identify how museum objects and art communicate Plains Indian lifeways.

Bison—commonly known as the American Bison or buffalo, a species of bison once found in massive herds roaming the grasslands of the Great Plains.
Nomadic—a people or group having no permanent home traveling from place to place to sustain themselves.
Parfleche—a bag, envelope, or tube made from dried hide, particularly bison, used for transporting items and are commonly decorated in geometric shapes.
Travois—a type of sled used by North American Indians to carry goods. Historically it consisted of two poles pulled by a horse or dog.

Tour may be modified to accommodate group size, time constraints, and/or gallery availability.
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By participating in this program, students will be able to:
1. Identify American Indian cultures as nomadic and understand how they traveled.
2. Analyze how Plains Indian tribes utilized materials from the environment to create material culture items.
3. Compare and contrast historic/traditional American Indian materials with contemporary objects.
4. Compare and contrast Native American and non-Indian cultures in the West.
5. Identify why Native American and non-Indian cultures clashed on the Plains.
6. Identify how museum objects and art communicate Plains Indian lifeways.

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