



This beaded parka from the Arctic region displays bold and colourful beadwork incorporating geometric designs and abstract motifs. (Collection: Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada.)

high prices for the objects for sale or barter. Trade with Europeans also introduced materials such as glass beads, ribbons, and floral and lace-like patterns which were incorporated into native designs. Special objects such as model canoes or tiny beaded moccasins were created specifically for European visitors who delighted in such whimsical souvenirs.

Over two-thirds of the material on view in The Spirit Sings has never been exhibited before in Canada, and comes to Glenbow from over 90 private and public institutions in Canada and around the world. The material held in European collections is particularly significant for it usually reflects more closely the traditional cultures at the

time of first contact, before they were overwhelmed by foreign influences. Viewed as a whole, the exhibition presents a common world view held by native groups across Canada, in which the spiritual and physical worlds are closely interwoven.

The entire second floor of Glenbow — over 1 850 m² of gallery space — is devoted to The Spirit Sings, and is designed to lead visitors through six distinct geographical areas.

The exhibition begins in the rocky, marine environ-

ment of the East Coast of Canada where the Beothuk, Micmac and Maliseet fished the ocean and rivers. They developed a strong trading network using the light, sturdy, birchbark canoe for travel and transportation.

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The visitor then passes into the gallery of the Northern Woodlands region, which stretches from New York to Labrador and James Bay. Here, the Iroquoian, Great Lakes, and Eastern Subarctic peoples followed a variety of lifestyles, from semi-permanent farming groups to nomadic hunters of migrating animal herds.

The exhibition then opens into the spaciousness of the Northern Plains where Blackfoot and Assiniboin pursued the great herds of buffalo on which they based their sustenance. Colourful quillwork and painted robes and clothing speak of a rich artistic tradition.

The Western Subarctic was home to the Athapaskan groups who hunted and gathered in terrain which

ranged from boreal forest to lakelands and river systems. Elaborately decorated clothing allowed a rich expression for these nomadic peoples.

Clear glass cases, and dramatic lighting in the Arctic gallery, highlight the distinctive parkas, kayaks, and hunting tools of the northern Inuit who relied on the caribou and ring seal for survival.

The journey through The Spirit Sings ends in the Northwest Coast gallery. Soaring display cases suggest the rain forest environment of the highly developed coastal peoples. Carvings, boxes, hunting and ceremonial objects, blankets and a large Haida canoe illustrate the blending of form and function among the Northwest Coast peoples.

The Spirit Sings is a historic exhibition for Glenbow, for Canada, and for the world. It offers perhaps the only opportunity to study material which documents the transition period when native cultures first came into contact with outside influence. By examining these intriguing objects assembled from the past, one may come to a better understanding of the rich and lasting legacy of native artistic traditions in Canada.

Beautifully carved Iroquois-type club with a human-effigy head, ca. 1850. (Collection: Earl of Elgin and Kincardine, Scotland.)

