

wp Closer Inspection

'Horse Nation'

American Indian museum explores ties to animal

BY KRIS CORONADO

The importance of horses in Native American culture has always been a familiar topic to Emil Her Many Horses, curator at the National Museum of the American Indian. After all, his last name is derived from a predecessor who owned a number of them. "My great-great grandmother, her name was Many Horses Woman," explains Her Many Horses, 57, who is of Lakota descent.



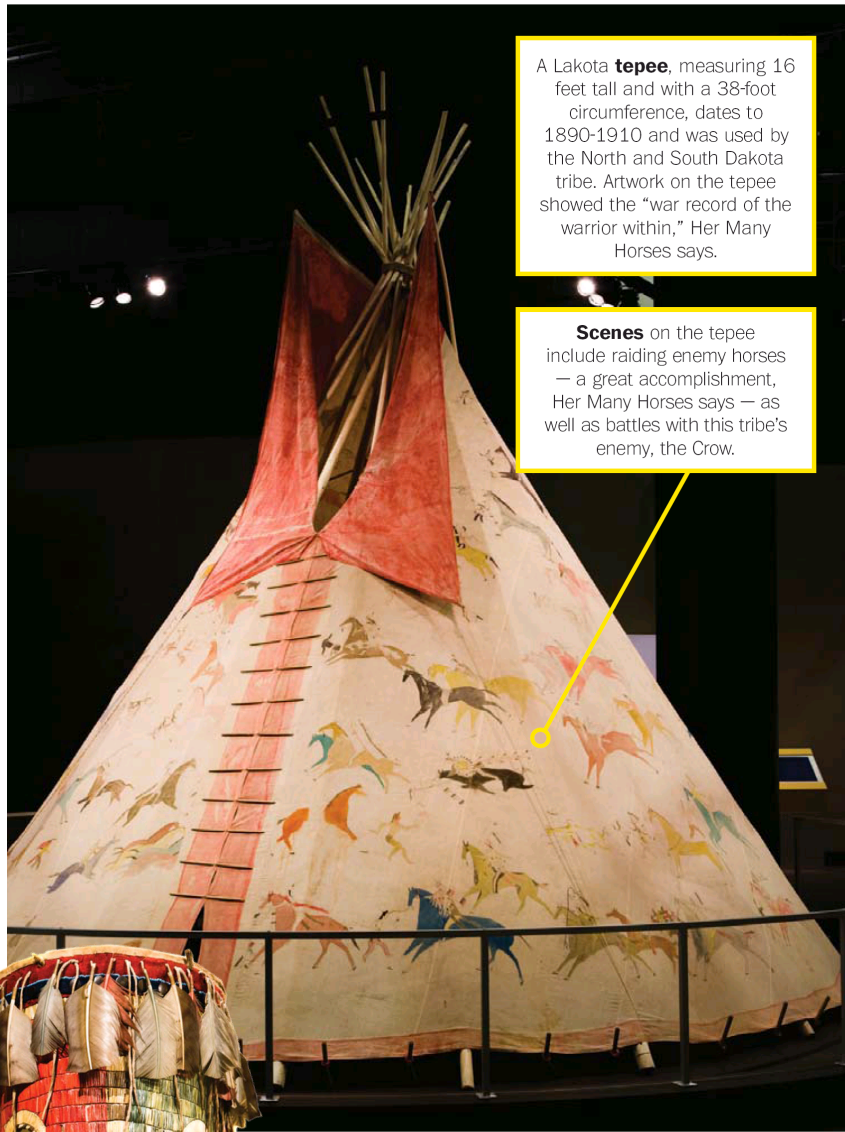
The exhibit "A Song for the Horse Nation," at the

museum (Fourth Street and Independence Avenue SW, 202-633-1000, nmai.si.edu) through Jan. 7, showcases tangible evidence of the animal's influence on native society. Among the more than 100 objects on display are an elaborate horse mask made of buffalo hide, a rawhide shield depicting scenes of horses riding into battle, and a mirror board with a horse head carved atop its frame.

"The horse has always been tied to the West and Native peoples. We really wanted to show the impact it had — through the arts, hunting, travel, to wealth and status," Her Many Horses says. "There are spiritual aspects of it. We wanted to show the horse became as important as the buffalo."

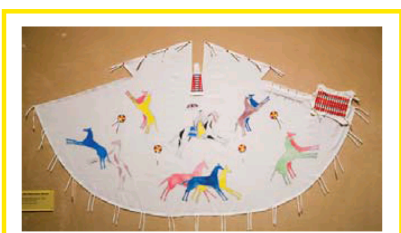


Used in war dances to reenact war deeds, **dance sticks** honor horses. This 1890 stick, created by No Two Horns of the Hunkpapa Lakota, honors his blue roan killed at Little Big Horn in 1876. Triangles indicate the horse was wounded six times.



A Lakota **tepee**, measuring 16 feet tall and with a 38-foot circumference, dates to 1890-1910 and was used by the North and South Dakota tribe. Artwork on the tepee showed the "war record of the warrior within," Her Many Horses says.

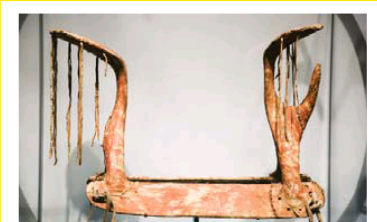
Scenes on the tepee include raiding enemy horses — a great accomplishment, Her Many Horses says — as well as battles with this tribe's enemy, the Crow.



As part of the exhibit, Her Many Horses decorated this miniature **tepee cover** depicting his great-great grandmother Tasunka Ota Win (Many Horses Woman). In a census, her name was translated incorrectly, hence Emil's last name.



Porcupine quills decorate this mid-1800s **Cheyenne horse mask**. To make the quills more pliable, the maker would soak them "in their mouths and bite them to flatten them," Her Many Horses says. Then they're flattened and sewn onto the hide.



This circa 1870 **saddle**, owned by a Wyoming Shoshone woman, evolved from Spanish-style saddles with pommels, Her Many Horses says. Such items were "introduced through trade, and the Native people adapted it to their needs with native materials," he says.

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