

Library Exhibits Promote Diversity and Inclusion

The sound of beating drums and a faint smell of sage filled the Multipurpose Room of the Mary Idema Pew Library Learning and Information Commons one evening in November of 2015. That night, Grand Rapids community members gathered alongside Grand Valley State University students, faculty, and staff to celebrate the opening of a new exhibit examining the contemporary Native American experience in west Michigan.

The Mary Idema Pew Library supports a robust calendar of events and exhibits throughout the academic year; these activities encourage exploration and enhance the community of learning already thriving in the library.

Exhibits hosted in the Mary Idema Pew Library often introduce visitors to diverse experiences, values, and worldviews.

Through these exhibits, University Libraries is able to deepen the institutional commitment to inquiry and inclusiveness, among other values.

For each exhibit, complementary programming is planned to help encourage community discussion and further the conversation; film screenings, panel discussions, cultural ceremonies, receptions, and other activities provide opportunities to engage in deep dialogue. Taking place in the library's Multipurpose Room, adjacent to

the gallery space, these supplementary events greatly increase the number of attendees who visit library exhibits.

One such exhibit, *Walking Beyond our Ancestors' Footsteps: An Urban Native American Experience* was displayed in the library in November of 2015. The exhibit—which included text, images, and objects crafted by local Native artists—invited visitors “to step into the gaze of a few of the Native Americans who have lived, worked, and studied in the greater Grand Rapids area.”

The exhibit was a component of the “Gi-gikino’amaage-min (We are all teachers): Defend Our History, Unlock Your Spirit” project, which aims to collect and preserve oral histories of American Indian elders residing in and near Grand Rapids. Urban Native populations increased during the middle of the 20th century as a result of a relocation program instituted by the federal government. The effort is managed by the Grand Valley Kutsche Office of Local History and reflects a partnership between multiple Grand Valley units, the Grand Rapids Public Museum, and the Grand Rapids Public Library.

During the *Walking Beyond our Ancestors' Footsteps* exhibit, several hundred people from Grand Valley and the greater West Michigan community participated in two complementary events: an opening reception and a campus dialogue. The previous Director of the Kutsche Office, Melanie Shell-Weiss, said the library was strategically chosen to host the exhibit and the supporting programs because of “its central location,

open floor plan, and the way that it invites people in and brings them together.”

In addition to highlighting diversity and inclusion through *Walking Beyond Our Ancestors' Footsteps*, the Mary Idema Pew Library has also hosted an exhibit from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals: 1933-1945*, and has helped students, faculty, and staff to explore the world of Islam through an exhibit depicting religion, politics, and culture in the country of Oman.

Events and exhibits hosted in the Mary Idema Pew Library contribute to the building's vibrant learning community and simultaneously support the university's social justice framework for inclusion and equity.

The Murmur and the Roar: Private and Public Perspectives of American Wartime is on display in the library from Nov. 1-Nov. 21, 2016 in honor of Veteran's History Month.

For the full schedule of exhibits for the 2016-2017 academic year visit <http://gvsu.edu/s/0hG>

For more information about the Gi-gikino’amaage-min project visit <http://gvsu.edu/s/0hH>