

For immediate release

February 25, 2020

Updated August 28, 2020

Gary Public Library and Cultural Center

stimg@garypubliclibrary.org

219.886.2484 ext. 317

Field Museum

312.665.7471

mtudor@fieldmuseum.org

First-of-its-kind exhibition series highlights Calumet’s natural and cultural treasures



© Field Museum

Encompassing southeast Chicagoland and northwest Indiana, the Calumet region is a place of contradictions—it’s home to marshes and steel mills, forests and factories, conservation and commerce. And yet, despite its importance to American industry and its unique emphasis on nature in urban spaces, no central museum exists to tell the Calumet region’s stories.

Calumet Voices, National Stories, the first-ever exhibition series dedicated to showcasing Calumet’s contributions to nature and culture, aims to fill that gap. Co-curated by the Field Museum and 15 community partners from throughout the Calumet region, this project will consist of four distinct exhibition experiences located in Chicago and Northwest Indiana.

“This kind of partnership is a first for the Field Museum,” says Madeleine Tudor, Senior Environmental Social Scientist at the Field Museum. “We wanted to showcase local organizations who hold much of the knowledge, artifacts, images, and specimens that deepen understanding of the Field’s own collections from the Calumet region. This project is making the Museum’s commitment to local communities even more tangible.”

From June 2019 through January 2023, *Calumet Voices, National Stories* will display at three different sites, each focusing on a different theme through unique collections of artifacts and stories. The first exhibit, held at the Pullman National Monument Visitor Information Center/Historic Pullman Foundation, took a closer look at Calumet's diverse landscape through the "elements" of water, fire, and earth. The second exhibit opened recently at the Gary Public Library and Cultural Center, and explores Calumet's role in shaping the nation through epic tales of natural, economic, and social opportunities. The third, to be held at the Porter County Museum's new Montague/Urschel Gallery, will take an aesthetic approach, letting Calumet's artists and craftspeople share the region's economic, ecological, and cultural complexities through their work.

Highlights of the current exhibit hosted by the Gary Public Library include a historic map of Lake County, Indiana, containing the names and locations of early European immigrants to the county; early 20th century botanical specimens collected from various locations in and around Lake and Porter Counties; and a selection of alloys used in the steel-making process. Also included are dolls representing the region's cultural diversity in the mid-1950s, a video documenting the steel-making process, and photos depicting a range of activism in the region, as well as an opportunity for visitors to "Share YOUR Calumet Voice". This exhibit was curated by the following partners: Calumet Regional Archives at Indiana University Northwest, Cedar Lake Historical Association, Crown Point Public Library, Gary Public Library, Hammond Public Library Local History Room, Lakeshore People's Museum, and the Northwest Indiana Steel Heritage Project.

"Visitors will be surprised to find the role this region has played, and continues to play, in the country's development," says Mark Bouman, Chicago Region Program Director in the Field Museum's Keller Science Action Center. "The region is America's crossroads—for nature, for economy, and for people. Each exhibition showcases the national significance of the region's rich natural, cultural, and industrial heritage through the local voices of residents past and present."

The exhibition series will culminate in a final installment, opening at the Field in February 2022, that brings objects, stories, and themes from all three sites together with highlights from the Field Museum's own collections from the Calumet region..

Calumet Voices, National Stories not only shines a spotlight on the region's past and present but considers its future—with its emphasis on nature, industry, and culture, the exhibition series poses serious questions as the Calumet region considers pathways to a sustainable urban future.

"You see crazy contrasts across the Calumet region: Rare orchids bloom by the Indiana toll road. Eagles nest and communities live across the way from an oil refinery. Amid a powerhouse economy, strong voices have fought like hell for nature, for workers, for a place at the table. It doesn't come together easily here," Bouman emphasizes. "How it does that—how

a region like this wrestles with sustainability—makes the Calumet region a true American treasure.”

All *Calumet Voices, National Stories* exhibitions are free with general admission at each respective institution, running on the following dates:

- The first *Calumet Voices, National Stories* exhibition ran June - November 2019 at the Visitor Information Center for the Historic Pullman Foundation and National Park Service, 11141 S. Cottage Grove Ave., Chicago, IL 60628.
- **The second exhibition runs January 30, 2020- Spring 2021, at the Gary Public Library and Cultural Center, 220 W 5th Ave., Gary, IN 46402. (Check library website <http://www.garypubliclibrary.org> for COVID-19 updates.)**
- The third exhibition will open Summer 2021 and run through January 2022, at the Porter County Museum’s Montague/Urschel Gallery.
- The culminating exhibition, showcasing components of all three exhibitions plus highlights from the Field’s own collections from the Calumet region, will open February 2022 at the Field Museum, 1400 S. Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL 60605.

The Calumet Voices, National Stories exhibition series is a collaborative effort of the Calumet Curators, a group of the Calumet Heritage Partnership, and the Field Museum. This series showcases the rich cultural, industrial, and natural heritage of the Calumet region. The Calumet Heritage Partnership, the Calumet Collaborative, and the Field Museum lead the effort to designate the Calumet region as a National Heritage Area.

Lead Partner in the Calumet Region: ArcelorMittal

###