Native American Voices: Delving Deeper through Technology

When visitors arrive at the Penn Museum’s newest exhibition, **Native American Voices: The People—Here and Now**, they come face to face with Native Americans from all across the United States and Canada, sharing their experiences in video and audio, and through objects and art.

For many Americans a campfire is a warm gathering place for telling stories and sharing experiences. At the center of the gallery, a circle of benches invites visitors to gather and experience a short visual presentation. Packed with vivid imagery and stunning archival photography, this **introductory video,** projected onto the gallery’s floor, orients the visitor to the exhibition. This unique experience, narrated by Native American voices, sets the tone for the historical and contemporary stories told throughout the exhibition.

Framing the central experience, four **massive tower screens** offer a mosaic of Native American faces, along with beautiful places of esteem. At each tower touchscreen, visitors can hear and learn from contemporary Native Americans through video, audio, and essays that tell their important stories, framed by the exhibition’s major themes: Local Nations, Sacred Places, Continuing Celebrations, and New Initiatives.

In an exhibition space that purposefully leaves the path unfixed, visitors may explore the objects—there are more than 250 of them—in display cases around the perimeter of the gallery. Twelve **multimedia touchscreen stations** accompanying the cases invite the visitor to explore objects, cultures, and Native American perspectives through a variety of entry points.

Each touchscreen station allowsvisitors to investigate each **individual object** in more detail via photographic enhancements that allow for closer examination, plus archival images, personal testimonials, and related maps. Visitors can **explore the entire exhibition collection** and search by object types, materials used, dates and locations, tribes and nations, and exhibition themes.

“The choice to employ extensive interactive multimedia elements as the primary interpretive tool for this exhibition was intentional,” noted Kate Quinn, Director of Exhibitions. “We hope that through the many first person interpretations presented, our visitors will leave the museum with renewed understandings of Native Americans, not as whispers of the past, but as vibrant and diverse peoples living today.