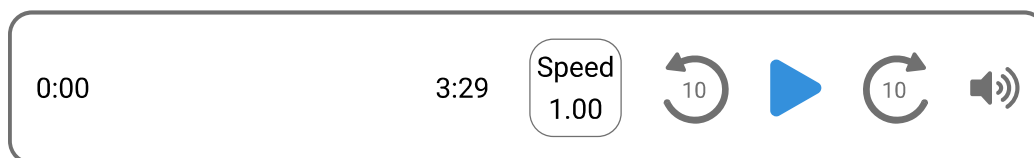


A&E Preview: Eiteljorg exhibition explores Indigenous skin markings

August 21, 2026 | [Dave Lindquist](#)

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This photo shows tattoos worn by Caitlin Newago, one of the artists featured in the "Re-Mark-Able Perseverance" exhibition. (Michael Durr photo courtesy of [Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art](#))

"RE-MARK-ABLE PERSEVERANCE"

Nov. 14 to Feb. 21

Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art

Tattoos represent memory, resistance and survival in this fall's "Re-Mark-Able Perseverance" exhibition at the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art.

It's more than art and visual aesthetics driving a resurgence in tattoos among Indigenous peoples in North America, said

Monica Raphael, the museum's curator of Great Lakes Native art, cultures and community engagement.

"As a result of settler colonization, my ancestors were no longer able to do their traditional tattoo practices," said Raphael, a descendant of Anishinaabe and Sicangu Lakota peoples.



Monica Raphael (IBJ file photo)

As part of the 1883 Code of Indian Offenses, the [U.S. government](#) suppressed Indigenous tattooing — known as "skin marking" among its practitioners. The Code of Indian Offenses' goal was cultural assimilation, and the policy remained in force in various forms until the late 20th century.

"Re-Mark-Able Perseverance" explores skin marking through segments billed as identity, social status, rites of passage, revival, and spiritual and religious significance.

The spiritual and religious significance segment ties directly to a 2024 [Lilly Endowment Inc.](#) grant awarded to the Eiteljorg. The grant, part of Lilly Endowment's Religion and Cultural Institutions Initiative, funded the exhibit that opens Nov. 14 at the Eiteljorg, 500 W. Washington St.

Raphael said some skin markings designated a person's clan, or subdivision within an Indigenous nation, for a specific spiritual purpose.

"After we passed and our work was done on Earth, we would travel to the spirit world, and we had those marks that identified our clan," she said. "They weren't just for the living. They were meant to identify you for the next life."

One of the artists represented in "Re-Mark-Able Perseverance" is Tone Chee (of Diné ancestry), a Phoenix-based U.S. Army veteran whose work relates the history of the Native American Church of North America.

"It is the fastest-growing Native American way of worshiping Creator," Raphael said of the church. "It is all the way from south of the Texas and Arizona border to northern Canada."

Raphael said the exhibition's artists are part of a strong

revival of Indigenous tattoo practices across the past 10 to 15 years.

The roster of artists includes Wisconsin-based Caitlin Newago (Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa), Minnesota-based Nipinet Landsem (Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa), Arizona-based Missy Dunn-Mahan (Tohono O’odham) and South Bend-based David Martin (Pokagon Band of Potawatomi).

“Re-Mark-Able Perseverance,” which is scheduled to be on display through Feb. 21, features photographs, videos and non-tattoo works by the artists.

Raphael also selected items from the Eiteljorg’s 10,000-piece collection of Indigenous artwork to display in the context of skin markings.

“I’ve carefully curated works from our vault that have not been seen yet and come from each of these tribes represented by the artist,” Raphael said. “Some of these works inspire tattoos. I have an artist who’s taken a bandolier bag [a shoulder pouch of beadwork worn across the chest] for inspiration for a full arm sleeve he’s doing on a client.”•

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