

# Spirit of the Rivers Monument

## Teacher Guide



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## ***Teacher Notes***

This guide to a visit to the Spirit of the Rivers monument is meant to give you some background information, suggest some discussion points while at the monument, provide activities while at the monument, and, if you would like, give some ideas for writing when you get back to your school. The discussion points offer some differentiation in difficulty of thinking so you can decide which would fit your particular group of students.

The guide is based on the idea that this visit will be anywhere from 30 to 45 minutes. Since this is probably a bus tour, there would also be time to use the restroom facilities and weather permitting, some outdoor “wandering” before boarding a bus for a ride back to your school.

There are 4 sections to this guide. Each section has possible discussion questions following the information given. You can use all 4 sections or pick and choose which you would like to do with your students. The only materials needed for the discussions in the section might be paper and pencils. For most of them, the questions could start as discussions first and end having you or a student take notes for the class. Most of these discussions would work with the individual thinking time and then sharing together as a group technique. You might also want to try Think-Pair-Share where students think on their own first, then share individual ideas with a partner, and finally share the ideas of the partnership with the whole group.

There are also three activities that can be used at the site. They require duplicates of the sheets provided with this guide as well as pencils or crayons for the students. If you have a chance to look at the activities ahead of time, you can decide which would work best for you and your students.

At the end of this guide is a list of materials that could serve as follow up resources for work back at school. The materials are either nonfiction, biographies, or memoirs. These genres fit within the common core standards. The writing suggestions fit within the research standard or work for letter writing.

**Suggested opening activity:**

Before you begin discussing the monument or giving any information about it:

- Have students look at the statues. Allow them to walk around and between the figures. Encourage them to do this individually and with no talking.
- Have each student think of an “I wonder” question about the figures.
- Have students share their questions with you.
- Record the questions on a sheet of paper.
- After the explanation of the statues, discuss which “I wonder” questions have been answered. (I would suggest doing this when back at school.)

## **Activities to Do at the Site**

*Note: You may choose any activity you might want to do. Feel free to choose one or more, depending on your time frame at the monument.*

### **What Did I See at the Spirit of the Rivers Monument?**

The sheet contains several pictures of details you will see at the monument. Have students take the sheet with them as they walk around the monument. Have them try to locate the items on the sheet. For your information, here is an explanation of what the details on the sheet:

- Forget-Me-Not creek — the fish ladder (rocks leading up the creek) that will help fish navigate the area, making it like it would have been during the time of the Woodland Indians
- Signage showing how the canoe is made — this sign shows the various materials necessary to construct a birch bark canoe — the white, flaky birch side of the bark would have been on the inside of the canoe because it was not water soluble
- Tumpline on birch bark roll on woman — this tumpline would have been formed of cattails and other reeds and allowed the woman to carry the weight of the roll
- Lacing on the canoe — the lacing is how the pieces of the canoe are held together. It is made of spruce roots. There would have been pine pitch painted over the stitching to keep it waterproof.
- Diamond willow stick markings — the stick the elder is using is made from the branch of a diamond willow tree. The marks are formed because the tree was infected with some form of fungus.
- Shoe the woman is carrying — these shoes would have been made from animal skins. She is carrying them because they are not water proof and she would not wear them while in water.
- Arms of the male portageur — his arms are up on the canoe because it allows him to carry it for longer distances.
- Signature of the artist — R.T. Wallen has “signed” the sculpture

## **The ABCs of the Spirit of the Rivers**

This sheet gives students a chance to wander around the monument and mark what they see. They can use names of objects or parts of the figures as well as words that are written on the granite base.

## **It's All About Editing... Spot the Differences**

The process for creating this monument started with drawings done as a preliminary proposal for the monument. The next step was to create a smaller model of the statues called a maquette (pronounced mah-ket). The final step is creating the large statues you will see on your trip.

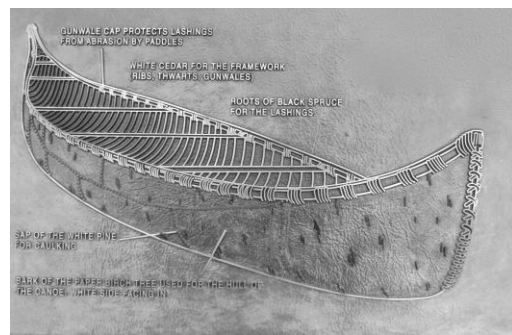
As the different stages were drawn or sculpted, changes occurred. These changes came about because of conversations with the Woodland tribes, because of engineering needs (like wind impact on the length of the canoe), or for aesthetic purposes.

This sheet shows the students the various forms for the woman figure. As they look for how it changed, you might want to compare this with a process they use when they write. The first draft goes through changed for accuracy and idea before it is done as a final product.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## What Did I See At the Spirit of the Rivers Monument

Mark each "detail" you find at the monument site.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## The ABCs of the Spirit of the Rivers Monument

Look carefully at the monument. Find parts of the monument or the wording on the granite base that fit with each letter of the alphabet. For example, “c” could be “canoe”.

A	B	C	D
F	E	G	H
J	I	K	L
N	M	O	P
R	Q	S	T
V	U	W	X
Z	Y		



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## It's All About Editing....Spot the Differences

Look carefully at this drawing of the woman figure, at the maquette of the woman figure, and at the woman figure in the final statue. Circle the differences you see in the various figures.



drawing



maquette



## Overview

The *Spirit of the Rivers* monument is an example of public art that celebrates the history of the area in which it is located. This monument consists of three figures, each of which is 10 feet tall. One of the figures is carrying a canoe which is 20 feet long. All the figures are cast from 3 1/2 tons of bronze and erected on gray, polished granite *plinths*\*.

While you are visiting this monument, take a careful view of not only the figures but the location. The site around the statues is being developed to mirror what the Native Americans would have seen as they were entering this area.

Native Americans inhabited this area between Manitowoc and Two Rivers for over 10,000 years before European visitors arrived.

\* *Plinth* = a base supporting a heavy vase or statue

*Possible discussion points to consider:*

- *Take a look around this spot. What is the first describing word that comes to mind?*
- *Depending on the age of your students, use the 10,000-year figure to make clear how long a period of time that would have been. For example, if students are 10 years old, tell them that would have been 1000 times as long as they have lived so far.*

## **The Location**

This subject of this monument is life of the Woodland Indians, native to northeast Wisconsin. These Indians spent part of their year around water, the other part in wooded areas.

The Woodland Indians were hunters and farmers. They found or produced ALL the materials they needed for food, shelter, clothing and tools. In the spring and summer, they lived where they could grow foods such as corn, beans, pumpkins, squash and others along the edge of wetlands. They harvested their gardens in the late summer. The wetland areas also gave them plenty of fish to catch. They would look for animals to hunt as well.

The Woodland Indians moved to sheltered areas when the weather turned cold. In the wooded areas, they gathered wood for fuel and nuts from the hickory, oak, and walnut trees. They hunted the wild game that also took shelter in the wooded areas.

*Possible Discussion Points to Consider:*

- *If students come from an area where they might not have access to a view of Lake Michigan, have them make a list of describing words to tell what they see when they look at the lake.*
- *Look around this area and try to imagine what it would have looked like before it was settled. Discuss what students think the natural environment would have been like. Then ask if this would have been a good area for Woodland Indians to settle and why. Would this have been an area for spring/summer living or fall/winter?*

## **Additional Information about the Site of the Monument**

For practicality purposes, this site was chosen because of the parking lot and the restroom facilities.

For historical accuracy purposes, this site has several features in development that will add to the understanding of the natural resources valuable to the Woodland Indians.

- The Forget Me Not creek is a natural water source that flows into Lake Michigan. It was not named by Native Americans but by German inhabitants for a garden of forget-me-nots planted along the creek. The creek is being cleaned up and replanted by Woodland Dunes. Invasive species have been removed and rocks have been added to provide a fish ladder. There are milkweed growths along the banks of the creek which will attract monarch butterflies.
- The *berm*\* areas will be planted with natural plant growth...short prairie grasses, prairie flowers, and more milkweed.
- There will be four types of trees planted in the area... canoe birch, white cedar, white spruce, and jack pine or white pine. These are the four kinds of trees needed to build a birch bark canoe.

*\*Berm = any stretch of grass or land that forms a kind of shelf above a river, train tracks, or highway. Some berms are part of the natural landscape while others are man-made.*

## **The Artist**

The sculptor of the *Spirit of the Rivers* monument is R.T. (Skip) Wallen. He was born and raised in Manitowoc. His father worked at the Manitowoc Shipyards, manufactures of submarines.

After high school, R. T. went to the University of Wisconsin in Madison to study zoology. His interest in nature and animals came from his father who took his family fishing and hiking to see and learn about many varieties of living things. His father also had considerable artistic ability, a talent passed down to his son.

During his sophomore year in high school, R. T. traveled to Alaska to live and work with his uncle. He assisted his uncle in gill netting salmon and attending a salmon fish trap. He returned to the Alaska, to the Aleutian Islands as a sophomore in college to participate in an archaeological dig. He was specifically tasked with identifying bird bones.

After college, he moved to Alaska and became a wildlife biologist with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. While there, he lived with Alaska Indians and Eskimos and documented the area and the wildlife through his drawings. This led to opening his own art gallery in Juneau. He produced charcoal drawings, watercolors and stone lithographs.

On a trip to Florence, Italy, with his wife, Lynn, R. T. saw a sculpture of a bronze boar. The bronze statue intrigued him and made him wonder if he could create such a piece of art in bronze. Upon return to Alaska, he submitted a sketch to the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration committed and won the honor of creating a bronze sculpture to celebrate Alaska's Silver Anniversary of Statehood. The finished piece is a brown bear on display near the Capitol in Juneau, Alaska.

In October 2009, Wallen returned to Manitowoc to do a presentation for the Rahr-West Art Museum. Following which a discussion was held about him doing a piece of public art for his hometown. Native American history was not recognized by any public art on the Lake Michigan shore. To recognize this history and to celebrate the birch bark canoe as an antecedent to the area's shipbuilding, he created the *Spirit of the Rivers* Monument. He also created two bronze plaques that reside on the path leading to the monument. One of them illustrates a stage in the Native American construction of a birch bark canoe. It is another example of his desire for this monument to recognize thousands of years of Native American residency and culture in Wisconsin

*Possible Discussion Points:*

- *Thinking about the life of R.T. Wallen, look at the monument. What influences from his life do you see in this sculpture?*
- *Look at the monument and the signs on the path. Find one new thing you have learned about Native Americans or canoes from these items.*

## **The Subject of the Monument**

The *Spirit of the Rivers* consists of three Indian figures — an *elder\**, a young man, and a woman — engaged in a shared journey. It is a tribute to the original Native people of the Great Lakes. The Native Americans in this region were Woodland Indians. These were the tribes which lived around the Great Lakes and the extended forested areas. The Woodland Indians that lived in Manitowoc County include the Ojibwa, Ottawa, Oneida, Potawatomi, Ho Chunk, and Menominee tribes. The figures in the monument do not represent any specific tribe but have features common to the tribes from this area.

Friends and families within the tribes formed communities at different places at different times of the year. In spring and summer, they wanted to be near water so they could plant and fish. In winter, they needed the wooded areas for shelter and so they could hunt. They knew when food resources would be the most abundant in different areas. They moved from one campsite to another to be near the best food resources all year long. They would also travel to be together for celebrations or commemorations, such as funeral rites.

The young man and woman are travelers, arriving on the lakeshore. The man is *portaging\** the canoe. He is wearing garters on his leggings to prevent rubbing of the buckskin leggings on his knees and using a *tumpline\** to ease transport of the canoe. The woman has a pack on her back holding all of the belongings they will need when they

arrive at their destination. She is carrying the belongings including a birchbark roll with a tumpline attached to help distribute the weight of the pack. The birchbark may be used in the building of another canoe or in the making of baskets and other items of utility.

The elder greeting the arrivals and pointing to a place they might set their canoe. The elder is using a walking stick made of diamond willow. The stick is made from the trunk of a diamond willow tree. The diamond-shaped depressions on the wood were caused by a fungus and were valued as decorations. Diamond willows were not originally native to this part of the country. They were grown in areas which were colder in climate. The fact that they exist in the Native American tribes in this area points to the fact that tribes often traveled and traded amongst each other, sometimes amongst tribes from far distances.

*\*Elder = a tribe member who is the keeper and giver of information within the tribe.*

*\*Portaging = carrying a boat on land between bodies of water*

*\*Tumpline = a strap made of cattails or other reeds used for carrying weight on one's head*

*Discussion Points to Consider:*

- Walk quietly around the monument. Notice features of the people in the monument or clothing articles that indicate that these figures are Native Americans. Discuss these with your class.*
- Remembering that the Woodland Indians traveled for hunting or planting purposes or for ceremonies, talk to a partner about the story you think the figures in this monument are telling to the people who come to see them.*



## **Resources**

Spirit of the Rivers, A Story in Bronze, Kerry A. Trask, Zander Press, 2018

Wisconsin Indians, Revised and Expanded Edition, Nancy Oestrich Lurie, Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2002

Indian Nations of Wisconsin, Histories of Endurance and Renewal, Patty Loew, Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2013

Wisconsin, Our State, Our Story, Second Edition, Bobbie Malone, Kori Oberle, Susan O'Leary, and Kurt Griesemer, Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2016

Electa Quinney, Stockbridge Teacher, Karyn Saeman, Badger Biography Series, Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2014, *Level R*

Mountain Wolf Woman, A Ho-Chunk Childhood, Diane Young Holiday, Badger Biography Series, Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2007, *Level Q*

Little Hawk and the Lone Wolf, A Memoir, Raymond C. Kaquatosh, Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2014, *Level S/T*

<https://vimeo.com/98083572> -- a video that connects the canoe to the land...would be good to show before going to the monumen