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Nations Within: The Four Sovereign Tribes of Louisiana

Louisiana State Museum photographic exhibit showcases Native American history and continuing heritage

Louisiana is a state known for its diversity. Inhabitants have included the French, Spanish, Africans, Haitians, Vietnamese and myriad other cultures. But before anyone else decided to make their home here, Louisiana was already the home of numerous Native American tribes.

The Chitimacha, Coushatta, Tunica Biloxi and Jena Band of Choctaw have survived disease, displacement, poverty and tribulation to eventually become federally recognized sovereign nations. This means they possess the same rights as state government and answer only to the U.S. Congress. Today they are not only surviving, but thriving culturally and economically.

The long struggle for sovereignty and the fight to preserve a cultural heritage is chronicled in Tim Mueller's photographic exhibit *Nations Within: The Four Sovereign Tribes of Louisiana*. Photographs capture common, everyday life as well as ceremonies associated with special events. Events range from culturally unique hair shaving ceremonies to modern day occasions like high school prom night.

The images of the exhibit along with the stories of each tribe are included in the book *Nations Within: The Four Sovereign Tribes of Louisiana* (LSU Press), written by Sarah Sue Goldsmith and Risa Mueller. Tim Mueller is currently the Photo Editor for *The Advocate* in Baton Rouge. He has also worked with *USA Today* and *Florida Today* during his eighteen-year career in photojournalism.

Nations Within will be on display at the Louisiana State Museum Old U.S. Mint in New Orleans located at 400 Esplanade Ave. from January 15 to March 14, 2004. For more information please call 800-568-6968 or visit www.lsm.crt.state.la.us.