

Press release

Berlin, 14 May 2019

The Long Night of Ideas

We are still here. The Omaha Speaking

On **6 June, 2019** from **5:30 pm onwards**, the **Humboldt Forum** invites you to take part in the **Long Night of Ideas** at the Berliner Bauakademie, Schinkelplatz, 10117 Berlin. For the event ***We are still here. The Omaha Speaking***, representatives of the **North American Omaha people** will show **two films** and hold **five discussions**, telling of their attempts to preserve their **language and traditions**. They will also offer **insights into the exhibition** that will go on display in the Humboldt Forum in 2020. The event will be held in English. Questions can be asked in German. **Entrance is free of charge**, and no registration is necessary.

Media representatives should please contact Michael Mathis at m.mathis@humboldtforum.com for mandatory accreditation.

The Omaha's name (Umónhon) translates as "those who go against the torrent". To this day, their lives are marked by their experiences of colonialism, racism and violence. As a result of the United States policy of assimilation aimed at indigenous peoples, the Omaha wage a daily struggle to maintain their traditions and language. Language is not only essential when it comes to communicating the Omaha's own worldview and maintaining rituals, but it also helps shape identity and creates a basis for other ways of seeing things.

The connection between the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin and the Omaha reaches back to the end of the nineteenth century, when Francis La Flesche, ethnologist and native-born Omaha, presented a collection of around sixty objects to the museum's institutional predecessor. Starting in 2020, these objects will be on display in the Humboldt Forum, marking a historic point of departure in a new chapter of the relationship between the Omaha and Berlin. In the exhibition, which the Stiftung Humboldt Forum is presently co-designing with the Ethnologisches Museum, the Nebraska Indian Community College and representatives of the Omaha, these objects serve a vital link connecting the past with the present. They offer visitors vivid proof of how the Omaha, despite – or perhaps because of – their struggle to maintain their traditions, continue to thrive until this day.

As part of the Long Night of Ideas, on 6 June 2019 visitors are invited to speak personally with representatives of the Omaha and view films that will introduce visitors to their position on the issues. From 6 to 11 pm, the ten-minute short film *Preview: Gegen den Strom* (Preview: Against the Torrent) will familiarize viewers with how the Omaha and the Humboldt Forum worked together to organize their shared exhibition. At 6:30 pm, 7:45 pm and 10:15 pm, the documentary *Umónhon Íye: The Omaha Speaking* will acquaint visitors with the Omaha language and tell of their attempts to keep it alive. Every hour on the hour, discussions will be held on a variety of topics. In one such discussion, native speakers and students of Umónhon will talk about the impact of the impending threat to their language as well as the projects they have launched to counter the trend. In another, visitors will learn about the Omaha themselves and what they understand as indigenous education. Other questions to be addressed: What were the boarding schools? What is the Nebraska Indian Community College? What happens when a language no longer exists? And what are the Omaha doing in the Humboldt Forum?

The event is part of the fourth ***Long Night of Ideas*** organized by the **German Federal Foreign Office** (#LNDI2019). The motto of this year's Long Night of Ideas is *Idea and Ideal – Europe*. The Federal Foreign Office will present the entire spectrum of the Office's foreign cultural and educational policies. You can find the entire programme at menschenbewegen.jetzt/LNDI2019 (in German).

Inspired by the eponymous Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt and their delight in exploring the world and comprehending it as a system linking nature and culture in myriad ways, the Humboldt Forum will establish a new venue for experience, learning and encounter in the heart of Berlin. The presentations by the various Humboldt Forum institutions will bring together a wide range of topics from science and art, nature and culture, history and society, accompanied by many different perspectives from past and present, near and far. As a foretaste, the Humboldt Forum is already exhibiting fifteen Highlights: eight are on show on Berlin's Museum Island and at the Kulturforum, while a further selection of objects is the focus for eight discussions held at locations throughout the city.

The Long Night of Ideas

We are still here. The Omaha Speaking

Date Thursday, 6 June 2019

Time 6–11 pm

Doors open 5:30 pm

Venue Berliner Bauakademie, Schinkelplatz, 10117 Berlin, not wheelchair-accessible

Language English, questions can be asked in German, the answers will be in English.

Entrance free of charge, no registration necessary

Film screenings

Preview: *Gegen den Strom (Against the Torrent)* (short film)

Time 6–11 pm

Duration c. 10 minutes

Language German

***Umónhon Íye. The Omaha Speaking* (documentary)**

Time at 6:30 pm, 7:45 pm, 9 pm and 10:15 pm

Duration 67 minutes

Language English

Additional information regarding the film screenings and events accompanying the film *Umónhon Íye. The Omaha Speaking* can be found at theomahaspeaking.com.

Discussions

Discussion 1: *The Omaha. Against the Torrent*

Time 6–6:30 pm

Themes Who are the Omaha? What are the Omaha doing in the Humboldt Forum?

Welcoming address Hartmut Dorgerloh, Director of the Humboldt Forum

Discussion 2: *Indigenous Education*

Time 7–7:30 pm

Themes What is meant by indigenous education? How can it coexist or assert itself alongside state educational strategies?

Discussion 3: *Boarding Schools*

Time 8–8:30 pm

Themes What were the boarding schools? What was their purpose? What were their lasting effects?

Discussion 4: *The Nebraska Indian Community College*

Time 9–9:30 pm

Themes What is the Nebraska Indian Community College? What makes it special? How does it promote language education?

Discussion 5: *Language and Culture*

Time 10–10:30 pm

Themes Does language influence how we think? What happens when a language no longer exists?

Participants Michael Thomas Berger, Edmundo Encinos, Barbara Jo McKillip-Erixon, Pierre Merrick, Wynema Eleanor Morris, Vanessa Dawn Hamilton, Glenna Slater

Organizer Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss

The event is part of the Federal Foreign Office's fourth *Long Night of Ideas*.

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