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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 1, 2026

NATIONAL PUBLIC HOUSING MUSEUM FALL 2026: OBJECTS, ART AND STORIES FROM OSAGE NATION

*On September 27, Museum Debuts New “History Lessons” Exhibition and
Unveils Commissioned Artwork by Osage Artist Lydia Cheshewalla*



Left to right: Ceremonial tie slide worn by George Tallchief, Chief of the Osage Nation in the 1980s. Photo of George Tallchief. Photo of Lydia Cheshewalla sorting through materials gathered outside of the National Public Housing Museum earlier this summer.

Chicago, Illinois (September 1, 2026) – The **National Public Housing Museum** today announced a new season of exhibitions, art and community dialogue centering stories and experiences of the Osage community in Oklahoma. The season includes the debut of a new ephemeral art installation by Osage artist **Lydia Cheshewalla**, and captivating new objects and stories in the ***History Lessons*** exhibition, with labels developed during writing workshops led by the acclaimed Osage poet **Elise Paschen**.

During a special opening event to be held Sunday, September 27, 2026 from 3 - 5 p.m., a free public conversation between Cheshewalla and Paschen will explore the power of place, memory, and how their art and poetry practice helps to support a reciprocal relationship with the

land and history. Following the talk, the museum will host a ticketed dinner with Indigenous specialties prepared by chefs from Osage Nation. Registration and additional information available at www.nphm.org/events.

Everyday Objects from Osage Nation

Opening September 27, the newest iteration of the National Public Housing Museum's signature exhibition ***History Lessons: Everyday Objects from Public Housing*** will feature new objects and stories from residents of the **Osage Nation** in Pawhuska, Oklahoma.

History Lessons, presented in the Joseph and Bessie Feinberg Foundation Gallery, is a rotating, collaborative exhibition featuring personal objects that represent their lenders' individual experiences and interpretation of home and community. Presented alongside these items are personal stories written by residents, developed in storytelling and writing workshops. This newest installation centers on stories from members of the Osage Nation, and was developed through writing workshops facilitated by poet Elise Paschen.

"The Osages participating in this exhibition are part of a very tight knit tribal community that is also like an extended family. The participants know each other and some are related. They care about each other and they are all united as Osage people," said **Russ Tallchief**, a community liaison on the project. "It is incredibly moving to see how the great depths of their cultural experience and knowledge is revealed through their writings and the objects they selected to represent home."

The newly-added *History Lessons* objects include dance regalia; a ceremonial tie slide worn by former Osage Nation Chief George Tallchief; a photo statuette of a beloved family member; a 200 year-old beaver hat; and a sarape blanket that has warmed four generations of one family. Presented together with other objects and stories from public housing communities in Chicago, Houston, and New York City, these deeply personal objects offer intimate glimpses of daily life across urban and rural communities while also revealing a broader history of tribal and federal housing programs committed to providing safe and affordable housing, from the Great Depression to the present day.

Paschen, an enrolled member of the Osage Nation, is the author of six poetry collections, most recently, *Blood Wolf Moon*, winner of the 2026 Oklahoma Book Award in Poetry, as well as *Tallchief*, *The Nightlife*, *Bestiary*, *Infidelities* (winner of the Nicholas Roerich Poetry Prize), and *Houses: Coasts*. As an undergraduate at Harvard, she received the Garrison Medal for poetry. She is the daughter of Maria Tallchief, America's first prima ballerina. Elise's poem "Wi'-gi-e" was credited as inspiration for the title of the non-fiction book, *Killers of the Flower Moon* (2017). Former Executive Director of the Poetry Society of America, she is a co-founder of Poetry in Motion, a nationwide program that places poetry posters in subway cars and buses. Paschen teaches in the MFA Writing Program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

History Lessons was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

An installation by Lydia Cheshewalla

The museum will also unveil the newly commissioned installation by **Lydia Cheshewalla**, an Osage artist from Oklahoma whose site-responsive, ephemeral practice is grounded in community relationships, land art practices, and Indigenous traditions of land stewardship.

The installation began through a collaborative community gathering on July 14, 2026 that explored the layered histories of the former site of the Jane Addams Homes on Chicago's Near West Side, recognizing it as Native land, a place shaped by generations of public housing residents, and a living site of memory. The gathering was a shared experience, where participants—including former public housing residents and other community members—moved through the site and collected seeds, sticks, bricks, tile fragments, used sparklers, flowers, cicada shells, and other natural and found materials.

Cheshewalla will incorporate these objects into an installation at the National Public Housing Museum, assembling it during public hours on Saturday, September 26, inviting visitors to consider the layered histories and stories of home embedded in the land surrounding the museum.

“Lydia Cheshewalla’s installation and her approach to making art unsettles so much of what we think we know about our relationship to land and to the intertwined and troubled histories of the places we call home,” said National Public Housing Museum Executive Director and Chief Curator **Dr. Lisa Yun Lee**. “I’m enthralled to be working with her on this project that reminds us all that the past and our collective futures are neither fixed nor eternal, but something that we must grapple with, contest, and reimagine.”

In a first for Cheshewalla, the installation will incorporate both natural materials and human-made objects, such as a salvaged brick signed by former residents of 1433 South Loomis, lent by one of the gathering participants, and tile fragments from the Chicago Hebrew Institute, which was demolished to make way for the construction of the Jane Addams Homes in the mid 1930s. After its installation, Cheshewalla will return all the natural materials to the lands from which they were gathered, an act of return that acknowledges the cyclical nature of all things.

Cheshewalla is an Osage ephemeral artist from Oklahoma, living and working in motion throughout the Great Plains ecoregion. Through the creation of site-specific land art and ephemeral installations grounded in Indigenous land stewardship practices and kinship pedagogies, Cheshewalla engages in multivocal conversations about place and relationship. Her work has been shown at Generator Space, the Union for Contemporary Art (Omaha, NE), Comfort Station, Harold Washington Library, the Center for Native Futures, Elmhurst Art Museum, and Brushwood Center (Chicago, IL) among others.

This installation was made possible by generous support from Laurel Appell Lipkin, Madeleine Grynstzejn and Tom Shapiro, Mirja Spooner Haffner, and the Poetry Foundation.

Looking Ahead

The museum's exploration of Indigenous histories and housing will continue in early 2027 with ***The Land Knows: Public Housing on Indigenous Ground***, a major exhibition inspired in part by conversations with residents of **Little Earth of United Tribes** in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the nation's first Native-preference public housing community. Through contemporary art, oral histories, archival materials and public programs, the exhibition will examine the intersections of housing, Indigenous sovereignty, displacement and community resilience.

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Images Available at National Public Housing Museum [Media Center](#)

ABOUT THE NATIONAL PUBLIC HOUSING MUSEUM

Our story starts with a simple truth: that all people have the right to a home. Founded by public housing residents, the National Public Housing Museum is the first cultural institution dedicated to interpreting the American experience in public housing. Filled with history, memories, music, and art, the Museum is a welcoming community gathering place that honors the stories and experiences of public housing residents. Through partnerships and programs, the Museum also serves as a civic incubator that inspires visitors to take informed action to advance housing justice.

Mission

To preserve, promote, and propel the right of all people to a place where they can live and prosper—a place to call home.

Location

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