

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
APRIL 28, 1994

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FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON ACCEPTS
ALLAN HOUSER SCULPTURE AS A GIFT TO THE NATION

WASHINGTON, DC -- Allan Houser, a noted Native American artist, today presented First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton with a sculpture entitled, "May We Have Peace." The sculpture is a gift from the Native American Nations to the American people. Mrs. Clinton accepted the sculpture on behalf of the nation at a ceremony at the Vice President's Residence this afternoon.

The bronze sculpture is eleven feet tall and depicts an American Indian male making a traditional morning offering of thanks for life, bounty and continued good health. Mr. Houser, a Chiricahua Apache, was the 1992 National Medal of Arts recipient. He has been described as perhaps the most important Native American sculptor of our time.

"It is a pleasure to accept this gift to the nation from Allan Houser," said Mrs. Clinton. "It is also a bit overwhelming, not just because the sculpture is powerful and magnificent, but because it symbolizes something so important: unity and harmony among all the groups that make up our diverse country."

The sculpture will remain at the Vice President's Residence until the completion of the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. The completion date is currently scheduled for 2001.

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**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS FOR THE HOUSER SCULPTURE DEDICATION CEREMONY
THE VICE PRESIDENT'S RESIDENCE
APRIL 28, 1994**

[Acknowledgments: the Vice President; Tipper Gore; Dick Trudell; and the tribal leaders in Washington for the events here this week]

It's a pleasure to accept this gift to the nation from Allan Houser. In fact, it's a bit overwhelming, not just because the sculpture is so powerful, and so magnificent, but because it symbolizes something so important: unity and harmony among all the groups that make up our diverse country.

I've always loved Allan Houser's work. His sculptures eloquently convey the experiences and traditions of Native Americans -- and also capture feelings and expressions that are universal to all of us as human beings.

An article a few years ago in the Christian Science Monitor said this: "The essence of Allan Houser's life is dignity. It is dignity that distinguishes his sculptures of American Indians and their cultures in a time when so much art has abandoned ideals -- both moral and aesthetic -- for cruder perceptions of experiences."

I would venture that Allan Houser is not only "the most important Native American sculptor today," as he has often been described, but one of the most important sculptors here and abroad. Indeed, his works appear in collections all over the world.

While we are all familiar with Allan Houser's extraordinary achievements as a sculptor, another facet of his life is perhaps less well known. Through art and through teaching, Allan Houser has worked vigorously to instill confidence and self-esteem in young Native Americans.

Allan Houser tells his students at the Institute of American Indian Art in Santa Fe: "This is where you can practice and be proud of yourself and your heritage. Be yourself, look back, see who you are, be proud of it and stand tall."

His lessons have helped a generation of young people search for and discover their own artistic expression. And I think he's right in believing that creativity is an important foundation for building self-esteem.

Allan Houser learned the importance of carrying on his heritage from his parents, who schooled him in the traditions of the Chiricaahua [CHEER-A-COW-A] Apache tribe through songs and stories about their ancestors. His sense of family is especially apparent in his compassionate portrayals of mothers and children, and the inseparable bond between them. These powerful images speak to our most basic emotions and loyalties, and remind us how urgently we must restore a sense of family in today's society.

Today, we are here to dedicate "May We Have Peace," Allan Houser's generous gift "to the American people from the first Americans." His depiction of a man "offering the sacred peace pipe," as the artwork is subtitled, represents an important Native American tradition that we all can share: Looking toward the East each morning and giving thanks for life, bounty, and continued health.

This is the first time a monumental sculpture has been given to the American people from a Native American family. It will be exhibited here at the Vice President's residence and then will be put on permanent display at the Museum of the American Indian when it opens on the National Mall.

On behalf of all Americans, I thank Allan Houser for his extraordinary contributions to Native American culture, to American culture, and for the energy and compassion he lends to enriching the lives of all Americans, and especially young people.

[Introduce Delvis Heath, Chief of the Warm Springs tribe, who will deliver a blessing].

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