



Smithsonian

National Museum of the American Indian

John Willis photograph exhibition

Mattie Lewis

2025

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Museum of the American Indian
Title:	John Willis photograph exhibition
Date:	1997-2007
Identifier:	NMAI.AC.361
Creator:	Willis, John (1957)
Extent:	13 Gelatin silver prints
Language:	English .
Summary:	This collection includes thirteen black and white photographs made by John Willis among the Oglala Lakota community in South Dakota.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Gift of John Willis, 2006.

Related Materials

A large collection of photographs by John Willis, including all images from "Views form the Reservation" are in the archives at Yale, call number [WA MSS S-4516](#) .

Processing Information

Collection processed by Mattie Lewis, Archives Technician in 2025.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); John Willis photograph exhibition, image #, NMAI.AC.361; National Museum of the American Indian Archives Center, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Access to NMAI Archives Center collections is by appointment only, Monday - Friday, 9:30 am - 4:30 pm. Please contact the archives to make an appointment (phone: 301-238-1400, email: nmaiarchives@si.edu).

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

John Willis (1957-) is an American photographer and Emeriti professor of photography at Marlboro College in Vermont. He completed his Master's in Fine Arts in 1984 from Rhode Island School of Photography. He was the founding director of The In-Sight Photography Project, which teaches photography to youth. Through this organization, the Exposures Cross Cultural photography program was created, which took students from Vermont and the Bronx to work with students in the Boy's and Girl's Club on the Pine Ridge Lakota Reservation and learn photography skills. The program was "intended to be both an exploration of the unique qualities of participating communities as well as a celebration of shared artistic experiences and connections between youth." His work is in the permanent collections of many museums including the Whitney, The George Eastman House Museum, Library of Congress, and the Getty.

Scope and Contents

Thirteen black and white 8x10 inch photographs from John Willis' book and exhibit titled "Views from the Reservation." The photographs were taken among the Oglala Lakota people on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Willis dedicated the exhibit to Grandfather Eugene Reddest and Uncle Tommy Crow, two elders who helped with his work. The images depict people doing everyday activities. Some of the photographs are restricted for cultural sensitivity

Image numbers P28741-P18753

Arrangement

Arranged by catalog number.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Oglala Lakota [Pine Ridge]

Cultures:

Oglala Lakota [Pine Ridge]

Container Listing

Photo-folder 1	P28741: Lakota Youth Riders, 2004 1 Gelatin silver print Notes: One black and white photograph of Lakota Youth Riders at the Baitesland Community Horse Races. Image shows an open field with six young adults on horseback.
Photo-folder 1	P28742: Vern Sitting Bear, 2004 1 Gelatin silver print Notes: One black and white photograph of Vern Sitting Bear and his Niece's Pet Wolf. Image depicts a man smoking a cigarette, stands in a Big Bats parking lot next to a car with a pet wolf on the hood.
Photo-folder 1	P28743: Young family, 2004 1 Gelatin silver print Notes: One black and white photograph of Young family, Sioux Nation Grocery Store Parking lot. It is unclear if Young is the last name or the age of the couple. Image depicts Oglala Lakota Sioux man, woman, and sleeping baby in the front cab of a pickup truck. Additional children can be seen sitting in the back of the truck.
Photo-folder 3	P28744: Elder praying, 2004 1 Gelatin silver print Notes: One black and white photograph of an elder praying to the Sundance Tree Shortly After the Ritual Ended. Image depicts Grandma Esther prays next to a Sundance Tree. Image is restricted for cultural sensitivity.
Photo-folder 3	P28745: Wounded Knee graveyard, 2003 1 Gelatin silver print Notes: One black and white photograph of the graveyard at Wounded Knee. Image depicts two dogs sitting in front of graves that are marked with painted wooden crosses. Image is restricted for cultural sensitivity.
Photo-folder 1	P28746: Home of Duane Reddest, 2002 1 Gelatin silver print Notes: One black and white photograph of the home of Duane Reddest. Image depicts a view of the side of house with various items, including hubcap, toaster, and a bookshelf in the yard. Also in yard are parked cars, horses, and a dog.
Photo-folder 1	P28747: Leroy Reddest's cabin, 2001 1 Gelatin silver print Notes: One black and white photograph of Leroy Reddest's cabin. Image depicts the exterior view of a small log cabin with a large antenna on the roof.
Photo-folder 3	P28748: Leaving the Inipi, 2001

1 Gelatin silver print

Notes: One black and white photograph of a man leaving the Inipi Ceremony. Image depicts Grandfather Eugene Reddest, shirtless and carrying a towel, leaving a Sweat Lodge ceremony. Image is restricted for cultural sensitivity.

Photo-folder 3

P28749: Preparing the chanupa, 2001

1 Gelatin silver print

Notes: One black and white photograph of a Grandfather Eugene Reddest preparing the chanupa, a sacred pipe, for the Inipi ceremony. This image is restricted for cultural sensitivity.

Photo-folder 2

P28750: Grandfather Eugene sleeping, 1997

1 Gelatin silver print

Notes: One black and white photograph depicting Grandfather Eugene Reddest sleeping at home.

Photo-folder 3

P28751: Funeral, 2003

1 Gelatin silver print

Notes: One black and white photograph of Earl Swifthawk's, medicine man, funeral. Image is restricted due to cultural sensitivity.

Photo-folder 2

P28752: Roadside sign, 2004

1 Gelatin silver print

Notes: One black and white photograph of roadside signs posted on top of one another. The top one reads, 'Custer was a Republican.'

Photo-folder 2

P28753: Father and son, 2004

1 Gelatin silver print

Notes: One black and white photograph of a father and Son standing in a yard. The father stands with his arms outstretched and his head cropped out of the image's frame. Shirtless, his stomach tattoos are visible, including one that reads, 'royalty.' His son, wearing a tank top and plaid pants, stands at his side.