

Native American Photography Book 'Dancing for Our Tribe' by Sharon Hoogstraten

Dancing for Our Tribe is a visual feast of more than 150 full-color portraits of tribal members in traditional regalia, showing readers, "We are still here."

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- "We Are Still Here"

Sharon Hoogstraten's photos and personal insights express the endurance of the Potawatomi tribe

Photographer and author Sharon Hoogstraten of Chicago is descended from some of the first Indigenous people to inhabit the Midwest. Her fifth great-grandparents, Archange Ouilmette, a Potawatomi woman, and Antoine Ouilmette, a French Canadian fur trader, established their home along the Chicago River in the waning days of the 18th century.

With the 1829 Treaty of Prairie du Chien, Archange was granted 1,280 acres on the North Shore of Lake Michigan. The Ouilmette cabin on that land, one of the few houses in the area, served as a stopping place for travelers to the region – one of whom went on to co-found the Chicago suburb of Wilmette, named for the family.

Their name lived on, but the Ouilmettes and the Potawatomi were moved and scattered by a series of punishing treaties that made way for American "manifest destiny" and, in Council Bluffs, Iowa, the Transcontinental Railroad. The culture might have disappeared but for the efforts of Potawatomi who refused to let it just vanish.

One of those is Sharon Hoogstraten herself, an enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. Her book, "[Dancing for Our Tribe: Potawatomi Tradition in the New Millennium](#)," not only gives voice to contemporary Potawatomi, but is also a visual feast of more than 150 full-color portraits of tribal members in traditional regalia, showing readers, "We are still here."



Sharon Hoogstraten

Now entering its second printing by the University of Oklahoma Press, "Dancing for Our Tribe" (304 pages, hardcover, \$80), is a valuable educational and historical addition to libraries everywhere, particularly those in the Midwest, where much Potawatomi history and heartache took place.

It's also intensely personal. She recalls that her maternal grandmother – "she was always proud" – enrolled the family as Citizen Potawatomi in 1960, when many Native Americans were cautious about revealing their Native ancestry.

Hoogstraten was inspired to create the book when she exhibited some of her photographs at a Family Reunion Festival on her home reservation in Shawnee, Oklahoma. Having gained approval to photograph Citizen Potawatomi in their regalia, she embarked on a decade-long pursuit, visiting all nine nations of the scattered tribe to construct a permanent record of present-day Potawatomi wearing regalia that had been passed down through the generations, modified, or newly created to reflect the influence and storytelling of contemporary life.



Native American dancers

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Sharon Hoogstraten

With studio work reminiscent of silver-toned 19th century portraits, she emphasizes the photographic technology of today. Tribal members, from children to elders to veterans, dance in their regalia, telling their stories visually and accompanied by personal hand-written messages intended for today and the next seven generations.

Short-listed for several prizes and celebrated by reviewers, "Dancing for Our Tribe: Potawatomi Tradition in the New Millennium" is available from the University of Oklahoma

Press at cpn.news/DFOT and from Amazon.

Hoogstraten will be featured in a documentary being released this fall, "Ouilmette," by Chicago filmmaker Susan Kelsey. In addition, Hoogstraten, an engaging and informed speaker, is available to present at educational and library programs, in person as well as virtually.

"My objective was to create a compelling visual record, a permanent archive for our place on the

timeline of Potawatomi and American history," she says.

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Native American dancer

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