



*Meriwether
Lewis*

**US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
and the
LEWIS AND CLARK
BICENTENNIAL COMMEMORATION**



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**“CIRCLE OF CULTURES”
North Dakota Signature Event
October 22-31 2004
After Action Report**

Background: In 2000, the National Council for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial decided to highlight some of the more nationally significant festivals and events and call them “Signature Events”. These events were to be those of nationwide historical significance, have the potential of high visitation, and be multicultural in nature. The “Circle of Cultures” was designated as the ninth of these Signature Events. The event was held at the University of Mary campus just south of Bismarck, North Dakota. The weather for the event was wet, windy, and cold with daily temperatures in the low 40’s. In spite of the weather, there were an estimated 50,000 people that attended the 10-day Signature Event including over 10,000 school children from all over North Dakota.

In addition to Ken Wilk and myself, Corps personnel that worked in one or more of the venues at this Signature Event included: Tim Bischoff, Charlie Deutsch, and Donnie Lindsay (all MVS); Rick Magee (NAE); Pat Kline, Susie Kline, Gene Herrmann, and Larry Spisak (all LRP); Jon Carlson (NWP); Allen Gwinn (NAB); Wayne Freed (NWO); Chris Botz and Schott Tichy (both MVP); Jeff Boutwell, Robbie Henderson, Tim Gibson (all SWF); Travis Chewing (NWW); Amy Cobb-Williams (SAS); Ken Weiner and Jacque Zink (both SPK).

Action: The Corps was involved in 4 separate venues during this commemorative event: COE Exhibit; the reenactments camp; Corps of Discovery 2; the Tent of Many Voices; and the showing of the COE video: “Lewis and Clark: A Confluence of Time and Courage.”

COE Exhibit: The Corps was part of a contingent of Federal, state, and local agencies sponsoring an exhibit. The exhibits were set up in the University of Mary Field House. The Corps exhibit had five parts – (1) one backdrop of the historic aspect of Lewis and Clark and one backdrop of the modern army connection; (2) a display of the Discovery Box; (3) prints of the Michael Haynes painting commissioned by the Corps; (4) a “trading center” and (5) an information table that contained a variety of COE brochures. The exhibit area was crowded with people even before the event was scheduled to start and continued that way all day until the event closed for the night. In all, there were 9020 interpretive contacts made at the exhibit booth.

Corps Encampment: Members of the Corps' Captain Lewis' Company as well as members of the Frontier Army Living History Association provided costumed interpretation (1803 Army) at the event site. Participating in this endeavor were Jeff Boutwell and Robbie Henderson (both SWF); Pat Kline, Larry Spisak, and Gene Herrmann (all LRP); Jon Carlson (NWP); Tim Bischoff and Charlie Deutsch (both MVS); Rick Magee (NAE); and Ken Wilk (NWK). Also participating were Jeff Bender, John Steinle and Jim Hebb (all with Frontier Army Living History Association). During the 10-day event, 25,955 interpretive contacts were made in camp.

Here, the cold, windy rain took its toll. Although most of the men had blanket coats, the constant dampness made it very hard to work outside. The event organizers constructed four earth lodges that were used for interpretive talks. On those occasions when one of the lodges was empty and with the invitation of the Mandan people, part of Captain Lewis' Company would relocate some of the reenactors within the earth lodge. This made it much dryer and warmer for those reenactors working the event. In addition, many more people were inclined to come inside and listen to a presentation rather than stand out in the rain. During the two days that the men presented in the earth lodges, there were 12,600 contacts made.

School Programming : School children attended three different stations while visiting Captain Lewis' Company. They learned about topics such as military drill, music on the trail, diplomacy, Indian sign language, and how they cast musket balls. School programming resulted in 27,465 interpretive contacts.

Tent Of Many Voices (TOMV): Because of the crowds around the exhibit and the reenactment camp, no rangers worked to assist Corps II as their crowds were much less. However, the COE did provide speakers for the TOMV. TOMV has a small stage for presentations and seating capacity of 150. Larry Spisak (LRP), Jeff Boutwell (SWF), and Tim Bischoff (MVS) were the Corps representative who spoke at the TOMV during this Signature Event. Mr. Spisak's presentation was about the Music of the Expedition while Mr. Bischoff did a presentation about George Drouillard. Together, they had 329 interpretive contacts.

"Lewis and Clark: A Confluence of Time and Courage" Video Presentation – During the Signature Event, the 30-minute education version of the video produced by the NWD L&C team was shown 5 different times. Each presentation had more spectators than the showing before and many very positive comments were received. In all there were 397 people that watched the video.

In addition, on the evening of Sunday October 24, the 1-hour version of the video was featured in a special venue in Arno Gustin Hall. Prior to the video showing, musicians Larry Spisak (LRL), Daniel Slosberg, and Danielle Hanna (a teenager from the Bismarck area) had an impromptu jam session and played songs from that period. In addition, Rich Deline, owner of EPS, Inc. the COE production contractor, gave a PowerPoint presentation about the making of the film. In addition to Corps representative, others invited as guests to this special showing included members of the North Dakota National Guard and the Discovery Expedition of St. Charles as they did assist with the filming.

Indirect Contacts: In the course of the Signature Event, newspapers, radio, and television reporters contacted several Corps representatives. Five (5) newspaper interviews resulted in several articles, including three front-page photos in the Bismarck Tribune. In addition, 1 radio interview, 9 television interviews, and 1 interview for a website were conducted.

Lessons learned

1. An item that was missing at this Signature Event was a very visible “Events Information Booth”. The “information table” was set on the second floor outside of the small cafeteria. However, there were no signs indicating that this was where to receive information. In addition, many of the workers at this table were unaware of where the different events were or who was speaking at what time.
2. The signage at this event was extremely poor. There were no directional signs to indicate where the different venues were. The only map provided was an overhead map of the university grounds but no indication as to where the rooms were inside or how to reach them.
3. As was seen in past Signature Events, there is little to no thought into planning for adverse weather conditions. In the 10 days of this Signature Event, it rained all but one day. On the one day that it poured, the COE stepped in and assisted the event organizers to move many of the events indoors. Making plans for inclement weather cannot be stressed enough to future event organizers.
4. Again there was a problem in that the vendors were mixed in with the exhibitors. This makes it difficult for the public in that some booths sell things while other booths in the same area have displays just to look at. Organizers need to be encouraged to keep these two groups separate.

Future outcome: This was the last Signature Event for 2004. The next Signature Event will be in Great Falls, Montana in June/July 2005. Much of the planning for this event is still underway. It is yet unclear as to the extent of the Corps participation.

Final thoughts: This event presented American Indian’s story and contributions in a very positive way. It was a great example of balance in presenting both the “Euro-American” side and the native perspectives on the issue. This truly was a celebration of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara cultures.

This event resulted in 16 indirect interpretive contacts and 75,766 significant, direct interpretive contacts. This one event almost equaled all of the indirect contacts that were made at the Signature Events in FY 04 and resulted in millions of people in the Missouri River Basin seeing the Corps of Engineers in a positive light.

All in all, the event was a success. Even though Mother Nature didn’t cooperate, the event was well marketed and visitors came in spite of the weather. Daily corrections and alterations to plans had to be made. All participants worked well with the organizers to

ensure the event went off smoothly and visitors enjoyed themselves, learning something along the way.

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