FOR MONTHS WE WATCHED WITH CURIOSITY AND ANTICIPATION as the new National Museum of the American Indian was constructed just down the street from our office. As the museum took shape, we were fascinated by its unique design. (You can read more about that in the feature article.) Some of us went to examine the architect's model at the building site more than a year ago. Several months later, after the building had been erected, some colleagues and I, while out for a stroll at lunchtime, watched a crane move large boulders into place in the museum yard. We were impressed with the care that was taken to prepare even the exterior of the museum.

And the interior is arguably more impressive. It features a vast and varied collection of Native American artifacts, displayed in creative ways. Visitors to the museum will learn a great deal about the First Americans.

And that education is needed. Many Americans have limited knowledge about America's Native cultures. If you were to ask students throughout the United States what they know about the history of the First Americans, you would probably get many different answers—and each answer would likely depend upon where the student grew up and which Native communities (if any) were nearby. As you will see when you read the feature article (and look at the fold-out map), the number of indigenous peoples on this continent is great, and their cultures are diverse. Unfortunately, not all of those cultures have been consistently preserved, so younger generations sometimes have incomplete knowledge of their ancestors.

The influence of ancestors is important to writer Linda Hogan, the author whose essay "For Life's Sake" is featured in this issue. She writes about her Chickasaw grandparents and the time she spent with them as a child. As an adult, she recognizes that she holds their traditional values. Hogan's ideas are illuminated by the lesson plan that accompanies her essay.

Finally, one last note: this is the last issue for which David Fay will be the assistant editor. He is leaving his editor's desk to begin intensive language study in preparation for his assignment as a Regional English Language Officer in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. (Some of our readers will be lucky enough to meet up with David overseas.) I'd like to thank David for his hard work and his significant contributions to *English Teaching Forum*.

—MK

(above) Architect's model of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). *Image courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian © 2004 Maxwell MacKenzie*

(background) A detail of the south side of the NMAI. *Image courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian © 2004 Maxwell MacKenzie*

(cover) Watercolor rendering of the NMAI by Elizabeth Day. *Image courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian*