FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sac and Fox Homeland exhibit on display through August 16 at Apple River Fort

ELIZABETH, IL - A touring exhibit on the heritage of the Sac and Fox Indians is on display through August 16 at Apple River Fort State Historic Site in Elizabeth, Illinois where it may be viewed daily free of charge.

Sponsored by the Missouri Humanities Council, the exhibit is part of a larger project undertaken by the Missouri Humanities Council to increase knowledge of Missouri’s Native American history, and will include future exhibits on the Osage, Shawnee, and Delaware peoples.

Leaders of the Sac/Fox Nation in Oklahoma will celebrate the exhibit and the recent reopening of Apple River Fort during a special ceremony centered on the theme “unity” on Friday, July 31. The event will be sponsored by the Apple River Fort Historic Foundation, Inc.

The exhibit’s content was developed by the Sac and Fox people through Sac and Fox Nation of Oklahoma Historic Preservation Officer Sandra Kaye Massey. Historian Fred Fausz of the University of Missouri – St. Louis developed material on the Sac and Fox migrations. The exhibit was designed by Greg Olson of the Missouri State Archives.

The Sac and Fox are closely related people whose origins trace back to the St. Lawrence River Valley during the time of French settlement of Canada. They speak similar dialects of the Algonquin language. As Europeans moved into Sac and Fox homelands in the Northeast, the Sac and Fox reestablished themselves in woodland areas of present-day Michigan and Wisconsin. By the era of the Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804-1806), the Sac and Fox hunted extensively in northeast Missouri and traded in St. Louis. Their homeland was centered on a large farming community named Saukenuk, where the Rock River meets the Mississippi in northwestern Illinois.

The exhibit focuses on one Sac and Fox legend that explains their sacred relationship to all creation. The legend tells of twelve boys who journey into unknown

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lands and strike a bargain with two spirits they meet on the road. On behalf of the Sac and Fox people and their survival, each boy sacrifices himself to be transformed into a sacred presence in the natural world. The exhibit focuses on this story because it links modern Sac and Fox people with ancient but continuing beliefs.

The Sac and Fox were abruptly dispossessed of their homeland in 1804 when William Henry Harrison, acting on behalf of the United States, tricked several tribal emissaries into a land sale they were not authorized to negotiate. In the 25 years that followed, U.S. settlers moved into the homeland, and the Sac and Fox were pressured to leave. One leader, Black Hawk, stood for resistance. Another, Keokuk, stood for accommodation. Tensions mounted to a point of a small military expedition in 1832 to confront and evict Black Hawk’s followers. The ensuing Black Hawk War made a public celebrity of Black Hawk, who was taken to meet President Andrew Jackson, and whose *Autobiography* remains in print today as a primary source of insights to a way of life facing great change.

The Sac and Fox now exist as three individual tribal governments. The Meskwaki established a permanent settlement near Tama, Iowa and are the Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa. The Nemaha tribal government is located in Reserve, Kansas and the tribe is the Sac and Fox Nation of the Missouri in Kansas and Nebraska. The Thakiwa tribal headquarters are in Stroud, Oklahoma and they are the Sac and Fox Nation of Oklahoma. The historic preservation representatives of the three groups formed a confederacy to make joint decisions regarding their shared history.

The Sac and Fox exhibit is part of a nation-wide “We The People” initiative of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The Missouri Humanities Council is a state affiliate of NEH.

Apple River Fort State Historic Site, administered by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (www.Illinois-History.gov), is a reconstruction of the 1830s civilian fort that was the site of a battle between Black Hawk’s warriors and Apple River settlers during the Black Hawk War. It is located along U.S. Route 20 in Elizabeth, Illinois and is open daily for free public tours.

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