**Narrator: Tom Jones**

I’m standing outside of Duluth Trading Company, the original building where Doerflinger’s was located. Oftentimes, Ho-Chunk women would sit in front of stores like Doerflingers. Y’know, during that time, they were able to spend their time making these baskets to help support the family. So they would make these baskets purely to sell to the tourists. And that’s how a lot of families actually survived.

So I started a book, *The People of the Big Voice: Photographs of Charles van Schaik*, and after I completed that book, I then decided that I wanted to do another book and I was interested in the fact that Ho-Chunk baskets weren’t being made that much anymore - we have about 14 basket makers currently - so I’m hoping that it’ll revive that tradition and also sort of have an encyclopedia of different styles of baskets. Basketmakers, you know, would use their imagination and make all kinds of different shapes. There’s so many different kind of styles, and I’ve gotten to the point now when I’m purchasing baskets is I’m only looking for those unusual ones. My favorite basket is one that my mother has, and what it was is it was two-tiered and on a stand and I didn’t know what it was for, it kinda looked like a sewing-type basket. It’s about maybe three feet wide and a foot deep, and I showed it to an elder, and she said that was actually a baby’s bassinet.

My name is Tom Jones. I’m a professor at the University of Wisconsin Madison and a member of the Ho-Chunk nation.

**Narrator: Ernie Boszhardt**

We are going to start down by the Oktoberfest Grounds in downtown La Crosse here. I am going to talk about Native American cemeteries in La Crosse, and there were a lot of them that go back a long time before the city was developed. Many of them have been destroyed by the construction of the city. So, the oldest known cemeteries that we have is down in the Oktoberfest Grounds area, where back in the 1860s when the city was just beginning to be developed, some of the founding fathers would then turn those artifacts over to the State Historical Society. So some of those artifacts, we now know, were about three to five thousand years old. And they include copper tools, though there is a copper axe for example. That [the copper axe] was recovered, and probably came from a three to five thousand year old burial, and then that copper axe was then turned over to the State Historical Society. There is no record of the burial, there was no archaeologists at that time. That style of copper axe is typically found, during that time period, in the burial. So, there was a three to five thousand year old cemetary down in the Oktoberfest at that time. The band that occupied La Crosse in the early 1800s was the Decorah Band. It was founded by Buzzard Decorah and then led by One-Eye Decorah into the Black Hawk War. But, their village appears to have been down by Downtown La Crosse. The main village was located down by the Oktoberfest Grounds. I wish I was an archeologist in La Crosse in 1860, [laughs] you know what. Before it was all gone. There is so much that we missed. And fortunately, there is tid-bits in the newspapers and going way back. And now with the internet, you can access the old newspapers. You can do research so much more easily then when I started in La Crosse in 1982, where you literally had to dig through and read the old columns, and such, or use microfilm. So, what we know is the tip of the iceberg of what was here. My name is Robert (Ernie) Boszhardt and I am an archeologist. And I worked at the Mississippi Valley Archeology Center at UW-La Crosse from 1982 until about 2010. My focus is the driftless area, I still work in the driftless area. Yeah, I spend a lot of time in La Crosse, Downtown La Crosse.

**Narrator: Elmer Peterson**

We're down at the end of, at the west end of Main Street, where it ends you know? And there located is the Lacrosse Players. And I was asked to a, got given the opportunity to make a sculpture because I had brought Pat Zielke the mayor down to watch me in making the Gambrinus. And he says we can, we have some money for a sculpture so... And it was wide open, what I should do and so I read the history of La Crosse and I came up with the idea of the Lacrosse Players. And so, and then I checked it out with Ed Hill, over at the University. Whenever I got an idea of what I wanted to do I'd check with him, and if it didn't bother him in any way that I would do it. So I came up with it.

I wanted to be accurate enough to be acceptable so that it just isn't disgusting to anybody, and would demean anybody, and just somehow be a bad thing. And so I did enough research that it would come out okay.

This was the place where, this plain, this large plain here was a field where they played lacrosse. And they'd pick sides and they even had their favorites, the women and so forth. On the racquet as you look at the sculpture there's a couple little things hanging off the side, those are little cloths, some colored cloths they would give the people to put on their racquet see?

I moved slowly over to the Sister City thing. Now the piece that we traded, that little boy there, it's not as big, but it sure is a dandy little piece and it's a gem. And it's not original in Epinal [France] either but it's their, their uh, symbol. This is our symbol, that's their symbol. And I got a good place, I found a good place for it. But I was thinking of having six, this be a park of Sister City sculptures, on each side as you go down. I thought it would be just great. This piece here, the La Crosse Players, the Gambrinus, I think their, I think their pieces that both artists and non-artists could like

My name is Elmer Petersen and my connection is that I made the Lacrosse Players sculpture.

**Narrator: Tracy Littlejohn**

We’re looking at the west wall of the Pump House where a mural was unveiled in June of 2014. It’s a mural that was done by John Pugh in the trompe-l'oeil style of artwork. It was a pretty big event. I first got involved with it because I had seen that they had gotten a grant to get this mural done and I knew it was going to be in the trompe-l'oeil style, and then the artist was in town last fall, 2013, and he stopped in at the Hmoob Cultural and Community Agency to talk with some of the elders and let them know what he was doing because he actually has quite an interest in the diverse populations. And it was at that point that I realized I was actually an admirer of his work.

And that same night they were holding an open meeting for people to come in and see what the art mural was going to be about, so I attended that. It was really an interesting night, at one point they had asked what La Crosse meant to people in the audience. And I actually wanted to say it felt like home to me, because I’m Ho-Chunk and my family has been here for a very long time of course. But I didn’t feel like everyone would understand it to the same extent that I do. And then after that got done I actually just went up to say hello to John Pugh and he invited me and one of my coworkers to go have dinner and we ended up talking for a couple hours. I was really impressed with how he wanted to go about doing this because he really wanted to get a picture of the diverse populations of La Crosse actually in the art work. And at one point while he was working on it he was asking for pictures of Ho-Chunks.

And I came over because he had been here for about a month working on it and it was all covered with tarp so nobody could really see it, and he invited me to come up and take a look. And I got up there and one of the primary persons or portraits that’s on there right in the center I, I almost cried because that’s actually in Ho-Chunk tradition one of my grandsons, Levi Blackdeer. Kinship structure is very different but, my great grandmother and his great great grandmother were sisters. And I was just awestruck that he had taken that particular image because the image he was using was from when my grandfather was granted the Medal of Honor for being a code talker during WWII. So I remember that exact moment in time when that picture was taken that he based that portrait off of. And than I looked and I saw other individuals that I actually knew or I knew about, like Merlin RedCloud, and then there’s even a picture of three Hmong elders who are actually elders that I recognize. So I was just really, deeply, impacted by the photographs he used to base some of these portraits off of on this mural.

The mural just, it represents basically the people of La Crosse, you can see someone rowing in the water, you can see images from Oktoberfest, a medical doctor. And, you know, the backset is the bluffs and you see the water and the steamboat, and I just think he did a really great job of portraying La Crosse as a community. I love it, and I know part of the reason that they chose to put it on the wall of the Pump House was because this is kind of more of an art district, it is a good way to get people to come down here and get to know the arts area of La Crosse. And I think it’s important for people to come here and remember some of the history of La Crosse. Some of these are more historical portraits; some of them are more contemporary. There’s someone on there that is still a young person, there’s people that have passed on. And I think it is just a great thing to see and to remind people of everyone that’s been here, not just in the last hundred years but everyone who’s been here.

I just really appreciated that they wanted to go with the trompe-l'oeil, because a lot of art work around La Crosse is statue or it’s very traditional two dimensional, and with the trompe-l'oeil you get the three dimensional and I think it is a really great way to show more contemporary types of artwork. My name is Tracy Littlejohn, I am a member of the Ho-Chunk nation, and I was born and raised here in La Crosse. I think it’s important to hear stories from all kinds of people. We are used to hearing a lot of stories from the mainstream community, and I’m not quite there, part of the mainstream community, and I appreciate that people seek out our thoughts about things.

**Narrator: Dan Green**

We’re in the north end of Riverside Park. I just turned my back, symbolically, on what the UW-L Native American students used to refer to as “the Colossus of Kitsch” or as Riverside Park calls “the Big Indian.”

First, my name is Kera Cho Mani ga. That means “the person who paints the sky blue.” You know me as Dan Green – what Malcolm X might call my slave name. At the time, the late nineties, the chamber of commerce in La Crosse proposed fifty-thousand dollars into a paintjob on the colossus – something that reinforces stereotypes about Native Americans. As a sociology student, I had for years looked into the influence of imagery, statuaries, and I was a part of the national anti-Native American sport mascot movement. I traveled to University of Illinois, University of North Dakota, and Cleveland Ohio on a regular basis to demonstrate and to teach about the harms, the largely psychological harms, of this kind of imagery of the big Indian standing behind me. So that was my interest, that here it is, in my hometown where I’m raising children that look like me – they’re brown-skinned, they’re dark-haired, we don’t get mistaken for anything but Native American, and here’s something in our hometown reinforcing harmful thinking about us, so I was compelled to do something.

By fortune, in the late eighties I had a friend who was the editor of the editorial page for the local paper and he had a new idea where he would have guest editorialists every Sunday, and he called me up saying that there were no people of color on his list – would I volunteer to do four editorials over the course of the next year? I said wonderful. So I chose the opportunity taking a look around me, not just the colossus of kitsch but The Freighthouse Restaurant right there, and there’s a number of stores just a few blocks away, all with the same archaic imagery – out of date, primitive, savage, Native American imagery out there. So I took that opportunity to write these editorials using scientific principles and concepts as to how we’re influenced by this imagery, and I got hate mail. People actually called. That was very violating to, in my own home, to have somebody calling me names and never attacking my principles, never even addressing the science of it. It was very demagogic, it was all emotion-laden, never an appeal to reason, and that’s exactly what I was trying to do – I was trying to get people to use their head, to make them think and not just react on an emotional level, but it went by a whole lot of people.

Over the years, the big Indian has become a symbol with what is wrong with our perception of Native America. Columbus Day, how we teach about Columbus, we make a hero of this mass-murderer, this initiator of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, did so many things that were just against humanity, and yet we hold him up as a hero. Well, here is this maybe well intended statue, but what we have to remember is that intentions do not determine consequences. Maybe these things were supposed to be honoring of Native Americans, and we appreciate the intention, but do we appreciate that maybe that’s not what they resulted in, maybe a mistake was made – well intentioned, but a mistake was made. So the big Indian became this symbol for not only what was wrong, but what to do about it. And so the Native American Student Association began using it as a gathering point and they would march down here from the university and we would have invited speakers and others who had an interest in changing how we perceive Native Americans and others for that matter.

One block away, there is The Freighthouse, and if you look in front at the main entrance you’ll walk by a fiberglass statue of a Pullman porter, and if you look at it that person’s skin is colored to resemble a Caucasian, but if you take a look, I found original photographs of that, and it was a Black man. So at some point they re-painted it, I’m assuming not to offend African Americans. So, that was well intended. Well, why don’t they do the same thing to the colossus of kitsch? Bring him into the modern era. If you take a look at all, with incredible exception, all of Native American imagery from Leinenkugel’s beer to Land ‘O Lakes butter etcetera, is always Native Americans in the past. Dressed in buckskins if dressed at all, with feathers, drums, horses, primitive weapons – never are they shown as rock and roll artists or using a laser printer or anything like that, and that’s what’s wrong, so if it’s got to stay, let’s at least make a statement: let’s bring him into the present.