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***Past Event: 2024 NCSBN Leadership and Public Policy Conference - Crossing a Continent and Seeking an Ocean with Lewis and Clark Video Transcript***  
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**Event**

2024 NCSBN Leadership and Public Policy Conference

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**Presenter**

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I'm talking about the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and this may be familiar to you, and it was familiar to me for years. I, as a kid, read books about Lewis and Clark. And it was a story about intrepid adventurers going into the unknown with no clear idea where they were going and they just had to figure it out as they went along, and that they were going into a wilderness.

And there's a lot of that traditional story that's quite right, that they didn't know where they were a fair amount of the time. And some of the landscape they saw was what we might call wilderness. But what it leaves out is just what a complex geopolitical arrangement they were entering. And it was of two sorts.

One is other empires have claims in that part of the world, the Spanish, the French, the British, and even the Russians. And their destination is the Pacific Coast. And the Pacific Coast had been pretty thoroughly probed by different European mariners, starting with the Spanish back in the 16th century and then reaching a crescendo with Captain James Cook in the 1770s and continuing on.

So it became, by the 1790s, a routine place for merchant ships from New England or from Britain to go all the way around Cape Horn of South America into the Pacific, go up and trade with native peoples in the Pacific Northwest, obtain sea otter pelts from them, take them to China, and swap them for silks and porcelain goods, and then continue around the world, around Southern Africa to either Britain or the Northeastern United States.

So these were voyages of over two years plus, but there were dozens of them. So the destination for this expedition, the Pacific Northwest Coast, is actually pretty well known before Lewis and Clark stepped out. And the route up is they're going up the Missouri River from the vicinity of St.

Louis. And as far as what is now North Dakota, that's pretty well known because fur traders had been going up there. It's the zone in between that is largely unknown to people of the United States. And they're also entering this very contested zone with multiple native peoples.

So where Jefferson wants this expedition to go to is a place where the United States has weak claims. Britain has better claims, Russia has better claims, Spain has better claims. Even the French have been there before.

None of them have a permanent presence on the Pacific Coast, except the Spanish in California and the Russians up in Alaska. In between is a contested zone. And so what Jefferson's trying to do is to start to play an American hand there. Jefferson had a long-standing interest in science and exploration, and he'd been trying to get somebody to go across the continent for a very long time since the 1780s.

Now he's President of the United States in 1801 and he can actually do something about it. But he's not just doing this out of a love of science. He's doing this because he wants the United States to have the option of expanding as far as the Pacific Ocean. Now he's not sure how that's going to happen, when it's going to happen, but he knows that if he doesn't start to play the exploration game, the United States is going to be frozen out.

So this is an expedition that is venturing into some very treacherous settings. Now, Jefferson is the key guy in getting this going. Without Jefferson, this wouldn't happen. His predecessor is President John Adams. Wouldn't have launched an expedition like this.

This is very much a Jefferson venture. But Jefferson is motivated by this guy, whose face you've probably never seen before. This is Alexander Mackenzie. He has the bad taste to be Canadian. And why is that a bad taste? Because Canadians aren't supposed to do anything before Americans do.

And Mackenzie made it across the continent more than a decade before Lewis and Clark. And then he went back to... He did this in 1793. The route down near, the green route, shows how he proceeded in order to get across the Rocky Mountains to what is now British Columbia.

And he marked this on the stone. The stone's still there, "Alexander Mackenzie from Canada, by land, 22nd July, 1793." And why is he doing all of this? He's in a party, which is about nine guys. He's the only one that speaks English. The other members are either French Canadians or they're Native Americans.

And without Native American help, he doesn't get through there. And they have to go this very tortuous route through the Rocky Mountains. And what's his goal? This cute animal, a sea otter. If any of you have been to the aquarium at Monterey, you've seen them, okay? Back in that day, they didn't keep them in aquariums, they just wanted to kill them by the thousands.

And why? Because they have very high value as pelts to sell in China. So there was an international commerce at that time. And these creatures are important elements in it because they're so highly valued in China. Now, Mackenzie comes to London and he publishes a book which is laying out what he's done, this exploration, and pitching the British government on an ambitious venture to set up military posts combined with trading posts to claim the entire Pacific Northwest region and keep any other country from doing so.

Jefferson gets his hands on a copy of this book published in 1801. And if there's one thing that Jefferson is always inclined to do is to think the worst of the British. So he's reading and he's going, "Yes, they're going to do this, and we got to get busy."

So Mackenzie is motivating Jefferson. Now, what he doesn't realize is that Britain has their hands...the British have their hands full dealing with problems around the world, especially dealing with Napoleon in Europe. But also the East India Company, which controlled British trade with China, does not want a new company based in Canada to compete with them.

So the British government pat Alexander Mackenzie on the back, gave him a night hood, and tell him to go back to Canada. But Jefferson doesn't know this. So he's motivated by fear of what the British are really up to. Now, if you also read that book carefully, you would not have any confidence that it was going to be easy to get across the continent because of the rocky mounts.

This map shows the state of geographic knowledge at the time. Now, if you just orient your eye, you'll see on the left side is the Pacific Coast. On the right side, with all the detail, is the Great Lakes in the Missouri Valley. But if you go and see the center, I'm going to press the right button, it turns out, this is the Rocky Mountains.

Look how narrow they are. It looks like you just pack a picnic lunch and you can go for the day. This is wishful thinking put on a map. Did anybody know? No. How does this happen? Because various fur traders and explorers are up here visiting with native peoples up here in what's now North Dakota and say, "There are some mountains to the West."

They go, "Yeah." They go, "They're low mountains, right?" And native peoples go, "Sure, yeah, they're low mountains, and you can get through them really easily. Yeah, very easy." So then they go back and they create maps that look like this. So this is what Jefferson believed was going to happen, that yeah, they'd have to go upstream up the Missouri River but they'd get up here and then basically you'd have a week to get through the mountains and over the other side and you are where the sea otters are.

Now, Jefferson has a man in mind for this job from the start, and it's Meriwether Lewis who is from this county, Albemarle County, Virginia. So Jefferson knows him very well. From a prominent family.

He's a young man. He is 28 years old. And he's been working for Jefferson already as his personal secretary, which is a very important confidential position. This is like being Chief of Staff is today for the President. So this is somebody Jefferson can trust. He's got a military background. He's a captain in the U.S.

Army at the same time. So he turns to Meriwether Lewis and says, "I want you to do this." And Meriwether Lewis is not a trained scientist, but he is a pretty good naturalist. He's good at describing things in writing that he sees. But he's also a very emotional guy. And he also had an understanding of his limitations and he felt like he needed a co-commander.

So he pitches Jefferson on recruiting a second guy, another army captain, a little bit older. He's 32 years old. His name is William Clark. So hence the Lewis and Clark expedition. If Jefferson had his initial way, it just would have been the Lewis Expedition.

Now, military men of that time were very prickly and competitive about relative rank. And technically, Meriwether Lewis has seniority even though he's younger in age than Clark. But he makes quite clear to Clark at the start in inviting him, "We're going to be co-commanders. We're going to decide things together."

I can't emphasize how unusual that was for its time, but it's essential to their success that they could split responsibility and not be competing for who's going to take the credit. It's really a remarkable joint enterprise. Now, Jefferson also provides a very detailed set of instructions of what they're to do.

They're to gather information on almost everything that's of potential value to the United States, the quality of the soil, the nature of the rivers, the wildlife, the fish in the rivers. And they were to keep their eyes open for this creature, the woolly mammoth.

Now why? Okay, they didn't have a clear idea about extinctions at that time. And the assumption was that if you could find bones of a creature, and they'd found mastodon and mammoth bones in places like the Hudson Valley and the Ohio Valley in the Eastern United States, the assumption is somewhere they must still be alive.

And if we can't find them in the East, they must be in the West. Okay. So this is one of the greatest failures of the Lewis and Clark expedition, is that they never found a mammoth, to Jefferson's deep disappointment. What they do find is thousands of native people, like this man who is Osage. And it's important to bear in mind that native peoples, even deep within the continent of 1803 when this expedition is getting launched, that they have had several centuries of at least indirect, if not direct contact with European peoples and have engaged in trade with them and have been impacted by the spread of diseases that had originated in Europe or Africa.

So the native world is not some sort of native primeval stone age world. You can see on this man, he's got a silver band around his left arm and he's got a cloth bandana around his neck. These are trade goods. Now he's clearly a native person and he's accessorized himself in ways that are distinctively native. But he's wearing objects obtained in trade with Europeans who value the fur pelts that native peoples can provide.

So they're not entering a world in which native peoples have no experience with Europeans or Euro-Americans. They're entering a world that's been influenced for quite a long time, but also a world where the native peoples want to stay Native peoples. They don't want to be part of the United States.

They don't want to completely transform and abandon their own cultures. But Jefferson wants Lewis and Clark to pay special attention to collecting information about all of these different Indian nations, their languages, their customs, their way of supporting themselves. Indeed, there's a very long document, and over half of it are instructions about what to look for about Indians.

And there's an agenda here, which is we are not going in there with a long-range goal of preserving that as an Indian land. We're going in there with a long-range goal that Indians are going to be obliged to give up their cultures, be absorbed within the United States, and free up most of their lands for American settlers. Now this is a map that shows the variety of native peoples that lived in that part of the world.

So you can see there are many different Indian nations, not just one. They don't speak the same language, they speak many different languages. They don't all like each other.

And part of the challenge of the Lewis and Clark expedition is to figure out which native peoples they can most successfully negotiate with in order to get information, to get support, including food because they're not going to be able to carry along all of the food that they're going to need on this expedition. They're going to have to do a lot of hunting along the way and they're going to have to obtain agricultural products from native peoples who raise crops.

Also, note these red lines in here. This is a map indicating the dissemination of the horse. Native peoples did not have horses. These were introduced from Spain, and native people start to obtain them at the end of the 17th century.

And over the course of the next century, they will make their way all the way up into what is now Canada. And this is transformative to the native way of life. Here is a painting, a later painting from the 1830s that shows a Native American on horseback with a bow hunting a bison.

The horse is most valued because it improves their chances of killing bison. And bison are animals that have very thick pelts that are very useful as robes to wear in winter. And they also have a lot of meat. So it improves the standard of living of native peoples.

They're much better fed. And we have some data about the heights of native peoples, and that's a measure of nutrition. And the native peoples on the Great Plains were the tallest native people in North America. And they're taller than most Americans, meaning Americans of the United States. So the native peoples there are eating a diet that's extremely rich in protein, thanks to their acquisition of the horse, which improves their ability to hunt the bison.

What this does is it sets off a land rush, not by settlers, not by American settlers, but by Native American settlers. And these arrows show various native peoples that are either moving from the East or from the Rocky Mountains.

So the Comanche, for example, are breaking away from the Shoshone and moving onto the southern plains. Or the people that are called the Sioux on here. We know them as the Lakota, usually. They're coming from what is now Minnesota. So the number of native peoples living on the Great Plains explodes. And the diversity of those people is much greater because they want in on this way of life.

But this brings them into violent competition with one another over control of bison herds. So it escalates warfare. All of this is happening in the 18th century, so just before Lewis and Clark are moving out there. So they're not moving into some sort of unchanged, unchanging primitive world, they're moving into a very dynamic place with a lot of native peoples, a lot of different native peoples, a fair amount of violence, and things have not sorted themselves out, and the Lewis and Clark expedition will add a new element of potential trouble to that world.

We don't have a lot of illustrations that were made at the time of the expedition. There's no artist that goes along with them, and of course, there's no photographer. So the paintings that you see were made much later.

They're made by people imagining what it looked like. Now you look at this scene and it's showing them in year one of the expedition, which is 1804. 1803 is about setting up shop. 1804 is about going up the Missouri River from what is essentially St. Louis.

And their destination is to get up to the Mandan villages, which are in the midst of what is now North Dakota. That's a stretch of the river, a long stretch of the Missouri River that's pretty well known and is routinely visited by fur traders based either in Canada or in St. Louis.

But that doesn't mean it's going to be easy. Now this shows a fairly peaceful meeting along the Missouri River, but there's going to be a lot of near violence. And that's because Lewis and Clark are completely unknown and unknowing about the world they're actually entering.

They have some experience with native peoples in the Ohio Valley, but it's a different set of native peoples here. And the dominant people are the Lakota, relatively newcomers, but very numerous and very aggressive about expanding their own power. And what they don't want is what Lewis and Clark are doing.

Because Lewis and Clark are going to go up to the Mandan villages who are the enemies of the Lakota. And Lewis and Clark are bringing along trade goods, which include guns and gunpowder. The Lakota don't want the Mandans to become better armed because then they'll be able to defend themselves against the Lakota.

Also, the Lakota have engaged in a kind of business with fur traders where if you pay them enough, they'll let you go on. Lewis and Clark, however, think because they're military guys, they shouldn't have to pay essentially tolls for going up this river. They think this is American territory now just recently purchased, Louisiana purchased from France.

So this is showing some of the near conflict between the Lakotas and then the Lewis and Clark expedition in their boats. It's real touch and go. It's amazing. There is no firefight.

But this indicates that Lewis and Clark are still figuring out what kind of political arrangements they're going to have to make in order to move forward. Everything has to be negotiated if you want it to go smoothly. Now, in the fall of 1804, they reached this destination.

This is a somewhat later painting made by George Catlin. It's of the Mandan villages. Now this is not what we usually think of, which is teepees. The Lakota lived in teepees. The Mandans lived in earth lodges. These are very environmentally efficient places to conserve heat in the winter and to stay cool in the summer.

And you can see there are a lot of people living in this place. And the Mandans are very receptive. They're very happy to see Lewis and Clark there. And they want to do business with them. They want to obtain guns and gunpowder and steel weapons like knives and hatchets. This is a drawing made somewhat later of a robe that's given to Meriwether Lewis.

And he's wearing it here on this occasion. Now, this later drawing shows the number one thing that enables Lewis and Clark to succeed. Again, it's a later painting, but the woman who is showing the way here is Sacagawea. She is not on the expedition from the start.

And one of the prime reasons that the Lewis and Clark expedition struggled during year one is because they don't have any women. Okay? Now, why is that important? If you show up in Indian country with 48 white guys, well, 47 and then 1 black guy and they're all really well armed and there's no women there, what's your assumption going to be?

They're a war party. Now, if there's a woman along, that's always an indicator that a group comes in peace. Lewis and Clark had no idea about this. Now they recruit her, not because they figured that out, but because they find out she's Shoshone.

So she's not Mandan and she's not Hidatsa, which are the other people living in that vicinity. Indeed, she was taken prisoner by the Hidatsa when she was 12 years old, 5 years earlier. Again, native peoples weren't all at peace with one another. Hidatsas had an advantage.

They live around the Mandan villages, traitors come there, they offer guns. The Hidatsa got some guns. And what they do is they find native peoples that don't have guns and then go and target them in order to take away horses, to take away human captives because both these things can be sold back at the Mandan villages. So they bring back this 12-year-old girl.

She's one of about eight captives taken, either women or children. The men have been killed, the Shoshone men in her small encampment. And she is then sold to the man represented there on the far right, Toussaint Charbonneau, who is one of these French Canadian traitors.

Again, we have no idea what he really looked like or what he wore. This is all imaginary. But she's important because where did the Shoshone live? At the headwaters of the Missouri River and the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, which is the most difficult and important place for them to get through. And they're going to have to engage in some special negotiations there to obtain the horses because they're going to have to leave their boats behind.

They have nobody that speaks the Shoshone language. So they find that she's in the Mandan villages. She'd recently been sold to Charbonneau and she became one of his wives, had at least three native wives that were very youthful for traitors, for linguistic reasons, but also because they provide important labor and connections.

So Lewis and Clark hires Charbonneau, and he's the one that's going to get paid. She's going to get nothing. But they're hiring Charbonneau, not because he impresses them, he doesn't, but because of his wife. And she's got a newborn infant, which is represented on her back. It's born in February, and 50 days later, the expedition will start up again in the spring of 1805.

And then things go a lot better because native peoples up river, further up river on the Missouri River notice there's a woman, she's got an infant. These people are probably not coming to make trouble. What they have trouble with, however, is bears. Now this image looks like, what kind of problem, is it looks like a Newfoundland dog.

This is a woodcut that's made by a member of the expedition, a guy named Patrick Gass, and it shows a bear has chased him up a tree. Okay. This is a much more effective image of what kind of bears they were facing. And the first time they shot one, Lewis and another guy take turns shooting at this animal, they put in 10 shots into the body of this bear before it became mortally wounded.

And then it took another 20 minutes to die. These are guys from the East. They have never seen a grizzly bear before. This is an order of difficulty beyond anything they knew. When the bear finished dying and they went and figured it out, they calculated it weighed 500 pounds and it was 8 feet, 7 inches tall, and 6 feet around the chest.

Okay? Lewis recorded in his journal, "I find that the curiosity of our men is pretty well satisfied with respect to this animal. This bear being so hard to die rather intimidates us all. I must confess that I do not like the bear and I'd rather fight two Indians than one bear."

So Sacagawea can't solve the bear problem for them, but they learn that it's probably just keep moving on rather than tango with the bears. Now after this, which happens in the middle of what is now Montana, the big challenge is time because they can't travel in the winter.

And you especially can't travel through the Rocky Mountains in the winter. Because you get up in the Rockies and you're talking about 10, 15, 20 feet of snow. There's no way they can get through it. They're either going to have to turn around and go back if they're lucky or they're going to have to do the Donner Party menu, which is each other because you'd be trapped up there with not enough food and you're not able to go out and hunt.

So it's August of 1805, but they understand that they basically got a month but they got to get through the Rocky Mountains now. And they don't know where they're going. There's no map. The only person who can help them is Sacagawea, but they got to find some Shoshone. And the Shoshone make themselves scarce because they don't like parties coming from the East because they think they're slave raiders.

But finally, there's an encounter, and this is an early 20th-century artist showing that encounter with one of these small Shoshone bands of about 100 people. And it turns out that particular band is led by Sacagawea's brother Cameahwait, which is complete luck. And she's able to explain who these people are.

Now she doesn't speak English. So the way it would work is she would tell Charbonneau who... She did know Hidatsa, and Charbonneau knew Hidatsa. So she would explain in Hidatsa to Charbonneau. Now, Charbonneau doesn't speak English, and there's only one member of the expedition who speaks French.

So Sacagawea is explaining it in Hidatsa to Charbonneau, Charbonneau is explaining it in French to George Drouillard, who can speak French. And he is explaining it in English to Lewis and Clark. So something is getting lost along the way, but it's remarkable how much they actually learn to understand and they're able to negotiate and work out.

They get the horses they need, they engage in trade. They provide some guns, some gunpowder, some other metal goods. The Shoshone are really happy about this because they're sick of running around hiding from other native peoples in the mountains where they're hungry a lot of the time. And so they're able to get through, and it's a 340-mile distance from the headwaters of the Missouri to the Snake River, which then flows into the Columbia River that flows into the Pacific.

Once they get over to the Snake River, they build new boats and then it's pretty easy because they're going downstream for the first time. So by November of 1805, they're on the Pacific shores hosted by native people called the Clatsops. Here's another modern artist's painting showing the moment we see Sacagawea. She knew a certain sign language that is a trade language among many different native peoples.

And that's what she's shown doing here. They're just basic indications that we're coming in peace and we have some stuff that you might like and we know you got stuff we would like. They built a fortification, they called Fort Clatsop. This is a modern replica of it built by the National Park Service.

It is not on the site of Fort Clatsop, the original one. Why not? Nobody knows where it is, okay? There's no archeological evidence that's found it. Part of the issue is this is a very humid environment and wood will rot away pretty quickly. And any nails that were used or hinges, probably weren't any hinges, but any nails that were used, the native peoples would have come and pried it open and taken that metal.

So they just haven't been able to find the original location. But they've built something based upon the sketches that Lewis made in their journals of what it looked like. They spend a very unhappy winter. Not



because the Clatsops are unfriendly, they're not, but the Clatsops have a lot of business relationships that they've developed with the British and American mariners on the coast.

So they're savvy about business. And Lewis and Clark don't like that because Clatsops drive hard bargains in their trading. And also, these are American guys. And what do American guys of the early 19th century want to eat? Meat.

Do they want to eat a lot of salmon? No. We love salmon. They didn't. They're eating salmon after salmon after salmon because the best salmon in the world is there. But these guys, they just want some beef and there's no beef to be had. Now they'll make do if they could get some elk and deer, and they get some of that, but not enough to satisfy them.

Now the next year is going back. And this shows the overall route. I mean, so you can see Louisiana, which had been acquired by the United States in theory. But in point of fact, the people actually living there are not Americans. They're Native Americans, and they weren't consulted in the treaty and they don't want to be part of the United States.

They want to keep their own independence. This shows the route that they took, the return route it took them two years to get over. It only takes them one year, well, really seven months to get back because most of the way back is downstream on the Missouri River.

They also know where they're going this time. And the only two violent deaths on this expedition will happen on the return when they get into a firefight with some Blackfeet Indians who were the enemy of the Shoshone. So if you make friends with some native peoples, you're going to make enemies of their enemies.

And this is going to be of enduring importance because the native peoples who in the next couple of generations will consistently help the United States are Mandans and Shoshone, and the enemies of the United States, including the people who will tangle with George Armstrong Custer at the Little Bighorn are the Lakota.

And then also there are similar violence between the United States and the Blackfeet. So people got long memories. And you can't make everybody your friend, particularly when you've killed some of them. So Lewis and Clark lose no members of their expedition to violence, which is remarkable.

You're leading a military expedition by 48 guys and you lose no lives in any kind of combat despite moving through multiple different native peoples with whom you have very shaky linguistic ability to communicate. Only one death by natural causes along the way.

One man had a ruptured appendix and died in year one. Now, military encampments are generally places where people die of disease at a very high rate. And so the ability of Lewis and Clark to conduct this expedition over two and a half years while never losing a man to violence and only losing one to a burst appendix of which they could have done nothing is remarkable and is one of their greatest achievements to do this because the odds against it were very long.

This shows the chronology that I've gone through. And this map shows...if you compare this with your memory of what that earlier map was with the Rocky Mountains, one small ridge that you could easily get over.

Now look what it looks like after Lewis and Clark have come back. So from a short-term perspective, Lewis and Clark are coming back reporting some bad news. United States does not have an easy overland route to get to the Pacific. This is not a place where you can routinely send military expeditions, and there is no commercial potential for getting over there overland to engage in the sea auto trade.

So there are a lot of people who will say, "Well, the Lewis and Clark Expedition really didn't accomplish any," but that's too short term because actually figuring out this map is pretty important. And members of this expedition have also noted the abundance of wildlife in that corner of the world, and especially of the beaver.

And many of them would return as so-called Mountain Men in the next 20 years, people like John Colter, who is the person who discovered what is now Yellowstone National Park, which initially was called Colter's Hell because of the thermal springs. But they come back and they're exploiting, hunting for the beaver pelts there, and developing relationships with native peoples.

None of this would have happened without Lewis and Clark. So Lewis and Clark is step one in the American occupation of the entire West, and it's extremely important for that. Now, just to conclude, how do we remember the Lewis and Clark Expedition? This is a statue that used to exist here in Charlottesville. It was taken down a few years ago.

It shows Lewis and Clark standing there and Sacagawea kneeling beside them. And by contemporary standards, this is upsetting to have a Native American woman presented in this kind of subordinate way, particularly given how important she was to the expedition in showing the way.

So the statue's been taken down, but the pedestal is still there. But there are also new statues. I haven't talked about York. He's the one African American member of the expedition and he's extremely important. He's not there as a free person. He's a slave. He belongs...in the eyes of the law of the United States, he belongs to William Clark and Clark's brought him along.

He's the only African American. He's the only enslaved person who is part of this expedition. We don't know what he looks like, but we do know he's a very respected member of this expedition because he's especially skilled as a hunter and he's skilled at negotiating with native peoples. So he becomes one of the point persons for engaging in trade.

And in part, this is because native peoples were fascinated by York. He's very distinctive-looking. They hadn't encountered a lot of African Americans before. And he's an impressive guy. He's a very strong, charismatic, articulate person. And they like doing business with York.

So York, during the expedition, becomes something of a free man, just during the expedition. And there are a couple of occasions where Lewis and Clark decide, well, we got some very important decision to make here. Let's open it up and have everybody vote. He gets to vote. How many enslaved people in the United States got to vote?

That would be zero. Okay? So this is a period of opportunity for York, and he's very important to the expedition. But once he's back at Clark's system, you're back to being a slave now and you better take some orders, and the relationship becomes quite abusive until Clark realizes that York's not going to put up with it and Clark frees York.

Now, he then moved to Louisville, Kentucky, and this statue is in Louisville, Kentucky, and it's a recently erected statue. So back in the 19th century or early 20th century, we had the creation of statues like this. You wouldn't have a statue of York made at that time.

But more recently, now there's a statue that's trying to imagine York and to remind people in the present of what an important person he actually was to this very important expedition. So with that, I'll conclude, and I'll welcome any questions that you have. Yes.

- [Woman 1] About... [inaudible 00:43:12.911]. About a month ago... Are we on? Am I on? Okay. About a month ago, my husband and I were in Canada for two weeks and we were amazed at every museum, every science center, every tourist attraction that we went to, the First Nation people, the Indigenous people, I think they used the word Indigenous more commonly, were heralded and brought to light.

And we were shown, as my husband termed it, there was the Indigenous people era. There was the French era, there was the English area, and then there was the independent era of Canada. Can you just contrast that with how we've kind of managed that in the United States from maybe Lewis and Clark's perspective?

- Well, I do think that in recent years, there has been a significant improvement in the United States in representing native peoples at historic sites. Now, there needed to be improvement.

So, you know, I think the Canadians and the Americans have moved at about the same pace. What I think is different is that Canada has continued a more robust public investment in museums than is the case in the United States.

The United States, there's been, in absolute terms, a decline in the funding of National Park Service and of other historic sites, State historic sites. And often you will go to them and you'll find exhibits that are pretty dated and interpreters who are very shorthanded.

Or you'll even go to historic sites and there's no interpreter there. They have a donation box. So I think the major difference is that if you go to a Canadian historic site, it's probably run by Parks Canada, and Parks Canada is pretty well funded by American standards, and they're able then to invest more in interpretation both in terms of the exhibits and in terms of the people who are there doing it.

That sort of stuff I think was considered much more important in the United States as of the 1960s and '70s when I was growing up. And I've been struck by how there's been a retrenchment on that in this country since then. Of course, there are exceptions.

There are places that do a remarkably good job. There are places that are pretty well funded, but I would say, in general, it's been partially defunded. If I don't get questions, I start singing show tunes and you don't want that to happen.

- [Woman 2] Okay. Fine, fine, fine. I'll ask one. Thank you so much for your presentation. It was very interesting. Wanted to ask you a little bit more about Lewis and Clark and their leadership style. So if you could just speak to how they were leaders, how they adapted with several challenges.

I wrote down that they were going to be working together, but none was going to take the credit, or I assume the blame had things... you know, had there been failures, of course, along the way. So can you just speak a little bit to their leadership styles?

- Well, I would say there are different personalities. And Meriwether Lewis was an emotional guy. And I think people who have looked at his life story closely are prone to think that he may have been manic-depressive.

And he understood that he needed a steady hand to help him. And that's Lewis. That's, excuse me, William Clark. William Clark isn't as imaginative, as creative, as insightful as Meriwether Lewis is, but he makes good, sound decisions one after another.

So they're a great team. They compensate for each other perfectly. So that's important. The other thing is they're starting out some military expedition. And, you know, the military has a hierarchy and it has all sorts of orders and regulations, and initially, they're trying to enforce all this stuff.

But, you know, if you ever follow the story of, say, Special Forces groups today that are in places like Afghanistan, people who are out there beyond, it's like nobody's going to wear a uniform, nobody's going to shave. Things have to get looser as long as that particular job is done that's desired. And that's what happens on this expedition is, on the one hand, they're starting out with guys that are...

They're all volunteers. Nobody is being forced on this expedition. They're promised that they're going to get extra pay and they're going to get extra land but only if you survive. And nobody quite knows how this is going to play out. So everybody is a volunteer and they're new, almost all of them. There's only two of them I think among the military members.

There were about 40 military members and then 8 French Canadian boatmen. Among the military members, only two of them had wives. So they're young men. And they're used to having a lot of access to alcohol. This is the peak period of American alcoholic consumption. And this is the peak age and gender cohort for excessive consumption of alcohol.

And it's often associated then with violence because people argue over cards or they think somebody's insulted them, or they just haven't had a fight for a day, whatever it is. This is a tough group to lead. And you get out there, are you going to...

Initially, Lewis and Clark are trying to hold court-martials to punish people. Well, where's the jail you're going to put them? Right? So what they could do is they could inflict up to 100 lashes with a whip. And that can be intimidating in the short term, but it's not very motivating in the long term, right? Or what really could get their attention is you'd cut their alcohol ration because they get a daily alcohol ration.

And if you're denied your gill of whiskey for that day, then, you know, that's got your attention. There are no teetotalers on this expedition. So Lewis and Clark start out with a group that's pretty disorderly, and over time, they reach an understanding with the men.

Certain things are going to be loosened up, but the guys are all going to have to start to behave in certain ways that are collective. So, for example, you can't go to sleep when you're on sentry duty at night, and there's going to be sentries every night because you could be surprised. And then that can be deadly for a lot of guys. And early on, they got some problems with guys just breaking into the alcohol and then dozing off in the middle of sentry duty, which is dangerous to everybody.

They managed to put a stop to that. On the other hand, they're not... You want to wear something different than your uniform? Have at it. You want to get that from the Indians and wear it? That's fine. So they loosen up on a lot of things, but they got certain core regulations that they persuade people to follow.

So the expedition, it shows a lot of flexibility and evolution as they go along to figure out how to get this group to succeed in the assigned mission most effectively and figuring out what is it that we don't need to be sticklers about.

- [Man 1] Thank you for sharing. I remember myself as a young child reading Lewis and Clark, their expeditions, and we're always amazed. But I wanted to see if you could expand upon their return. Many thought that it sounded like, or at least some thought they failed.

There's no clear route for trade. But what did Jefferson see? Was this a success? Or what were the next steps he took, or his agenda as they returned, and for the next, I guess, the rest of his tenure as President?

- Well, Jefferson's not going to have a lot more of his tenure. You know, he's going to have another couple of years. And one item that's kind of frustrating for him is that Lewis was the guy who kept the journal. And Lewis is supposed to organize all the papers and write it up and then bring it to Philadelphia and get it published because they want a counterpart to Alexander Mackenzie's book.

They want Europeans be able to read and see that the Americans have accomplished this. And Lewis just finds it really tough to get the time to concentrate on doing this. And then there's the tragic end of Lewis' life, which happens in October of 1809.

He's under some pressure, considerable pressure because there have been questions raised about his handling of the monies as governor of the Louisiana Territory, which was everything on the West Bank of the Mississippi, north of what is now the state of Louisiana.

And so he's coming East to actually answer to that investigation and bringing the notes for the journal when, along the way, he commits suicide. So in terms of getting this into print, I forget exactly when it happens, but I think it's around 1812, which is a lot later than Jefferson would have liked. And in terms of finding a commercially viable and militarily viable route to get to the Pacific, that's disappointing.

And the United States has a really small military at that time and a very limited military budget. So there's no possibility of establishing a U.S. military post on the Pacific coast at that time. There is a trading company, an American-based trading company run by John Jacob Astor, and he will establish a private fortified trading post at a place now called Astoria in Oregon on the Columbia River.

And he will do that in 1811, but it's not a U.S. government operation, and Jefferson is not President anymore. And this only lasts two years because there's a new war with Britain that does erupt in 1812. And in 1813, there's a hostile takeover of Astoria by the British. So in the short term, there's not an impact, and Jefferson isn't able to follow up on it in his presidency in any significant way.

But there is the indirect follow-up of these so-called Mountain Men who are following in the wake of Lewis and Clark and are often themselves initially former members of the expedition.

- I've got a...

- She knows there's a prize if you ask the most questions.

- Exactly. A signed book.

- Inspirational to all of you.

- Yes, I do have another question. I know, again, looking to the leadership lessons that we can learn here from Lewis and Clark and from Jefferson and his vision of assigning them as the leaders on the expedition, you know, we talk about leadership a lot, and being a good leader requires understanding how to delegate responsibilities. And I think your answer to my last question talked about, you know, making sure that somebody is up at night and you're not drunk and falling asleep or taking a nap when they're on duty.

How did Lewis and Clark delegate responsibilities to the individuals on the expedition?

- Well, they are figuring out the personalities of all of the people. And I'm sure this is something that's all familiar to you, that you have to figure out the personalities of the people you're working with.

And you find out what people are good at and also you find out what they're not so good at. And that's what Lewis and Clark are doing. They're not some sort of distant commanders. That's not possible. They're camping out with these guys, they're talking with them through the day. They get a very good feel for these men with their differential skills.

So you need to find out who are the really good hunters because a lot of the food they're going to eat is freshly killed game. And they've got to be good enough that they can go out on a given day and get the game because an expedition needs to keep moving.

They need to know who are the guys who are really strong and good at hauling boats because this is not a matter of paddling these boats going upstream. You're pulling them. And then there are stretches where guys are going to have to get out on the bank with ropes and literally walk along the bank and haul this, and then you'd have to rotate them. You have to figure out which of these guys got some medical knowledge.

There's no doctor on this expedition. Lewis and Clark are kind of the doctors, but there are some people with some folk understanding of medicine in their midst. So, for example, there was one guy at Fort Clatsop, he strained his back really badly, and nothing seemed to work that Lewis and Clark themselves could do to help this guy.

And so one of the people, actually one of the members of this expedition, not Sacagawea, but a guy, knew something about sweat lodges. Sets up a sweat lodge, and they treated this guy in this sweat lodge and he got better. Now maybe it's partly psychological or maybe it loosened up his back muscles in an effective way, whatever it was.

Okay? The point is that Lewis and Clark knew this guy, knew something that might be useful, and they didn't stand on kind of military protocol saying, "No, we're the guys, we know some medicine and none of these guys do." But there's a fluidity, a willingness to experiment, to, at the end of the day, be pragmatic about everything, and that enables them to get the most out of everybody on this expedition.

- No, I have one.

- Well, you're going to have to... She's ahead of you.

- Yeah, I know.

- Two to one.

- I get it. Yeah. I was wondering, I mean, all these guys have significant strong characteristics or skills that allowed this expedition to be so successful. And like you said, there was no doctors. But what would you consider of, I don't know, maybe a trait in, you know, Lewis and Clark's leadership or how they delegated?

What do you think a characteristic that all these individuals had that, you know, let's say you removed that prior to their expedition, like, it would not have allowed the expedition to be successful as historic as it is?

- Well, I think what I've emphasized so far, which is that they are responsive to new information. They're not just stuck in military regulations or even their instructions from Jefferson. They're trying to follow Jefferson's instructions.

They're trying to collect this information, but, you know, in this particular setting they're in, which is so challenging and so diverse, so risky, you are going to have to be responsive to new information and come up with ad hoc, pragmatic responses to things you never anticipated. And together, Lewis and Clark are as good as it gets at doing those things.

- [Man 2] How was it then...

- [Man 3] Step up a little bit.

- So I was going to ask about Sacagawea. That's not how we were taught to say it in school. Say it again for me.

- Well, you will find different pronunciations, but the one that I find is phonetically put in the Lewis and Clark journals is Sacagawea.

- I'll go with your interpretation.

- Okay.

- So it seems to me that it had to have been difficult or maybe wise, I don't know, but for these two military-minded individuals to acknowledge that they needed a guide, but then to take someone that they couldn't communicate with effectively and rely on her. Can you tell us a little bit more about that relationship and how that played out?

- Right. They become very dependent on her. And so, yeah, in an ordinary setting, to follow the lead of a 17-year-old woman who's Native American, who doesn't speak your language, is not what they would have picked.

But what's the alternative? The alternative is to have nobody who can speak with the Shoshone. So they adapt to it. Also, they liked her. They're not able to communicate much with her. But people's personalities can come through even if you're not able to talk much with them.

And they come to really like her and feel protective of her, and they come to really dislike Charbonneau. But they got to keep that relationship going. So not able to, like, middle of the expedition fire Charbonneau because he'll take off Sacagawea and that's it.

They also become incredibly fond of her infant who's 50 days old when the thing starts. And his name is Baptiste, his first name. So he's Baptiste Charbonneau, but he's called Pomp on the expedition by the Americans.

And when the expedition is over, William Clark offers to adopt Baptiste. And his parents agreed to this because they got the sense that Sacagawea was really impressed by the Americans and thinks that she wants her son not to grow up in the French fur trader world of Charbonneau but would rather he grew up knowing the kinds of things that William Clark knew.

So William Clark secures him a good education, and he'll live on, and he'll actually become a kind of celebrated hunter's guide, mostly to European royalty that's coming over for trying some of the last bison hunts during the 1850s and '60s. And he'll live on into the 1860s.

So I would say that she impresses them as having an appealing personality. She seemed quite modest to them. Somebody who is pretty stoical, who endured the hardships of this expedition better than most of the men, and is very useful to them.

And they become very sympathetic to her and her son. And in part, as she rises their estimation, Charbonneau sinks. Well, we have a winner. You with two questions.

Nobody can challenge you. So thank you very much. Thank you, all.