

Generations of Symbols:

The Morongo Band of Mission Indians Basket Collection

A major exhibition of southern California baskets, "Generations of Symbols," opens at the San Bernardino County Museum on Saturday, March 13. The exhibit, which will occupy both the Fisk and Schuiling galleries, runs through October 17. It is sponsored in part by the Morongo Band of Mission Indians. The exhibit is included with paid museum admission.

More than 100 baskets will be on display, all from the collection of the Morongo Band of Mission Indians. The baskets reflect several southern California basketry traditions, including Cahuilla, Cupeño, Serrano, Luiseño, and Diegueño.

"Prehistoric Californians in interior southern California were hunters and gatherers who moved with the seasons between mountains, foothills, valleys, and deserts to gather resources," said Curator of Anthropology Adella Schroth. "They depended on baskets for storage and for preparing, cooking, and serving food because baskets are light and sturdy. Pottery vessels, in contrast, are heavy and easily broken—not very practical for a mobile society."

Baskets in the collection are pictured and described in an exhibit catalog written by David D. Earle and published as a Museum Association Quarterly called "The Morongo Band of Mission Indians Basket Collection." This full-color catalog will be available for purchase in the Museum.

"The tradition of basketry dates back at least 10,000 years in the American West," said Schroth. "It is both a technology for making utilitarian objects and an art form with techniques and motifs handed down through generations of basket makers."