Exhibit purpose

In 2017, shortly after the Wyoming Legislature passed the Indian Education for All Act—which aims to educate Wyoming students about regional American Indians—Wyoming Humanities (thinkWY.org) raised funds and launched a project to create an educational exhibit describing the events that established the Wind River Indian Reservation.
This story is complex and shaped by social and political injustice that continue to impact the native people and governance of the Wind River Indian Reservation. Historical research conducted by wyohistory.org was supplemented with numerous oral interviews and recommendations provided by tribal members, scholars, and educators to compile the information used in the exhibit and supporting curricular materials. The result is a story with many voices and narratives, intended to both inform and provoke the viewer.
Overview of the two tribes

**Eastern Shoshone**

The Shoshone originated in the Great Basin of the interior West. As the first Native Americans in the region to obtain the horse, they advanced north and east into present day Idaho and Wyoming and then onto the northwestern Plains as far east as Devils Tower. The Blackfoot prevented farther northward expansion. The Shoshone were eventually pushed south and west by the Crow, Lakota, Cheyenne and Arapaho. They subsequently established themselves in the Warm Valley (Wind River Basin) area of Wyoming. There is a growing body of information supporting the idea that Shoshonean-speaking people—possibly the Sheepeater Indians—may have lived in northwestern Wyoming for millennia.

**Northern Arapaho**

Compared to other tribes in the region, the migrations of the Arapaho are complicated and not well understood. The Arapaho probably originated in northwestern Minnesota. Pressure from neighboring tribes—particularly the Cree who had obtained guns from French fur traders—pushed them west out of the eastern woodlands onto the Northern Plains. Moving south, they crossed the Missouri River, eventually occupying a broad and ecologically diverse region from the Powder River Basin in Wyoming to the Arkansas River in central Colorado. In the late 1870s, the northern bands eventually moved to the lower Little Wind River west of present-day Riverton, Wyoming.

**Prominent historical themes**

This project focuses on interactions among the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho people and the U.S. government. The two nations came to live in the Wind River Valley of central Wyoming in the wake of various treaties, agreements, historical events, and promises kept and broken.

The following themes provide context for many of these events. As you talk with people about the exhibit and the adult and kids guides, the following icons highlight major recurring themes influencing the history of the Wind River Indian Reservation.
Chasing gold & building railroads
The government steadily favors prospectors, railroad builders, and homesteaders over tribal interests.

Horses & guns
Nomadic pedestrian native culture is changed by innovations that transform travel, hunting, war, and relationships with others.

Climate of fear & violence
In 1824 the Bureau of Indian Affairs is added to the War Department, now the Department of Defense. Hostile attitudes toward dealings with Indians increase tensions as Euro-Americans move west.

Assigned lands
In 1848, a U.S. government official first mentions “colonies” for Indian tribes—separate places where natives would be taught farming and Christianity, and be protected from the perceived vices of white people.

Broken treaties
Treaties with other nations, including Indian nations, must be ratified once negotiated. Between 1778 and 1871, the government signs more than 600 treaties with Indian nations. Most were poorly enforced, broken, or remained unratified.

Written vs. oral
Tribes traditionally pass down history through oral traditions while Euro-Americans place more trust in the written word.
Assembling the exhibit

Place your exhibit in a well-trafficked area that encourages viewers to engage with all sides of it. Assembling your exhibit is very simple. With a few folds and by sliding the pieces into place, it is ready to display.

The exhibit comes in three pieces—the base, the main section, and the top title piece. The base has slots for the main section to slide into, and the main section has slots for the title piece.

Step 1

Stand the base with the buffalo to your left. Fold its two inner creases at 45° angles away from you. Then fold the outer two creases back toward each other.

Step 2

Do the same for the main section. With the landscape facing you, fold its inner two creases at 45°, but toward you this time. Then fold the outer two creases in toward each other.

Step 3

Maintaining your folds, slide the main section into the slots on the base. You may have to adjust your angles a little to get them to fit. Then slide the title piece into the slots on top—facing forward.
Step 4
Check the front of the display. The result should show a 3D landscape created by layered planes.

Step 5
Check the back of the display. The result should show the entirety of its educational material.

Things to keep in mind
• Do not set up against a wall.
• Place so wheelchairs can easily move around the entire exhibit.
• Remove exhibit carefully from shipping box, and save the box.
• To move the exhibit, you will need the box for safe transport (especially in windy conditions).
• Be careful putting the exhibit together. Don’t use glue or tape (tape will tear surfaces if you need to take down the exhibit).