**The Making of a Tipi**

[Larry Belitz in the Museum of Westward Expansion in front of the tipi he made for the museum]

**(Larry Belitz)**

Okay about 30 years ago we were going to buy a ranch in South Dakota. And we needed some money. And I did a tipi for myself and it was 18 feet and this tipi is almost 14 feet. They heard about the Arch and they were just getting under way with the Arch. They thought it would be neat to have a tipi, and an 18 foot tipi. The guy that was the curator at that time was Frank Joachimstahler.

**(Larry Belitz)**

They actually did some consideration of changing the Arch to accommodate an 18 foot tipi. That was not possible. So this is how we got started with the tipi business, we said we can make one. The first one we did was for the Children’s Museum in Indianapolis. Because they have the ceiling for it, it was a brand new tipi.

**(Larry Belitz)**

So we did this as a second and ever since then I have been doing tipis. The original tipi that we did was this height but it took 14 hides and this one took 9 hides .I’m glad to be speaking to everybody because that first tipi I did I came back 10 years later and this is out here. It wasn’t the same tipi I did. Cause you know how people embellish things. They were saying 23 hides or something, I forget what number but it was a changed tipi. But we want to get all the facts straight. So this is a 13 foot almost 14 foot tipi. That means the distance across the tipi at the center from side to side is gonna be 14 feet, if that is 14 feet then this is going to be 14 feet. They go together, so this is almost a 14 foot tipi across here and almost from the floor up to the points of the earflaps up there somewhere.

**(Larry Belitz)**

This would be called a one wife tipi or almost a two wife tipi. The early day tipis were about this size, cause the dogs were pulling everything involved in this tipi. In the earliest days the early horse days to. Each pole here is from Lodge Pole pine and these weigh about 10 pounds apiece. They are very light weight. These would be pulled behind a horse to move a camp, you usually needed at least 3 horses. Usually 2 horses to carry the poles and tipi cover and the other to carry all of your own personal processions. Everything on the tipi the only tools I used besides elbow grease is this scraper it’s called a “wahintka” and that’s the Sioux name for it “wahintka”