
AMERICAN INDIAN CULTURAL CENTER & MUSEUM

A project of the Native American Cultural & Educational Authority

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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21st Century Mound Builders

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK (August 5, 2008) – Oklahoma has a unique history that differentiates it from any other state in the nation. Oklahoma's newest earthen architectural landform, the "Central Promontory Mound" located at the American Indian Cultural Center & Museum (AICCM) is rising proudly on the Oklahoma River. Strategically positioned at the intersection of I-35 and I-40, east of downtown Oklahoma City, the AICCM will celebrate the remarkable continuation of culture and innovation that is prevalent throughout the state. The media conference will commence on **August 12, 2008 at 10:00am (CST) at the American Indian Cultural Center & Museum site, located at 659 American Indian Boulevard, (formerly Eastern Avenue), Oklahoma City, OK 73129. Please enter from the east side of the site at the Entryway gate and proceed to the "Courtyard of Nations" located on the interior of the "Central Promontory Mound."** For more information call Shoshana Wasserman at 405.239.5503 or shoshanaw@aiccm.org. (This media conference and dedication is not open to the public.)

The Central Promontory mound on the site of the AICCM was inspired by the mound building cultures in Oklahoma and eastern North America. As Native cultures have done for thousands of years, we will once again gather at the river to celebrate an important milestone in Oklahoma's history," says Gena Timberman, Executive Director, Native American Cultural and Educational Authority, the state agency developing the AICCM. Oklahoma has a rich legacy of mound building beginning many centuries ago with Oklahoma's indigenous American Indian people (ancestors of the modern day Caddo Nation and Wichita & Affiliated Tribes), dating back to around 500 A.D. Regulators of early trade, these innovative people flourished as an extension of the Mississippian mound builders east of the Mississippi River. The Spiro Mounds in eastern Oklahoma are considered one of the most important archaeological discoveries in North America. The political and social systems being used by these people were progressive and complex. Thousands of Village Agriculturalist occupation sites have been documented, especially in the Arkansas and Red River drainage systems in Oklahoma. For some 650 years these "Caddoan" people followed a lifestyle adapted to an agricultural economy. Along the Arkansas River and its major tributaries they built a number of important mound centers including Harlan in Cherokee County, Norman in Wagoner County, and the most well known, Spiro in Le Flore County. The Spiro Mounds site was formally excavated in the 1930's by the University of Oklahoma after initially being looted. What became clear was that in addition to locally-produced wares, many of the excavated cultural objects were made from materials that traveled here from distant lands: copper from the Great Lakes region, conch shell from Florida, and turquoise from the Southwest. These people had an advanced trade network established with other cultural groups that spanned a large portion of the present day United States. The AICCM will again position Oklahoma as an epicenter for cultural exchange and a gateway destination to Oklahoma's Indian Nations.

This circular earthwork feature, 1,000 feet in diameter, ramps up to a 90 foot Promontory Peak that serves as a marker for the Summer Solstice sunset, and offers a magnificent view of the surrounding region.

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“The topping out of the Promontory landform is a twenty-first century continuation of the centuries-long tradition of North American mound-building, not through replication, but by expanding the vocabulary of earthworks as an iconic landscape focal point for social gathering and cultural interaction across all nations,” says Kirt Rieder, Principal, Hargreaves Associates Landscape Architects.

Visitors to the American Indian Cultural Center & Museum can experience the Central Promontory through a journey that starts below earth’s grade on a 1,780 foot path and ascends through other unique features of the Center, the Hall of the People and outdoor Sky Terraces. The spiraling Promontory Path provides a metaphor for the cyclical relationship of all things to each other. The Central Promontory cradles the Courtyard of the Nations, and together, these land forms acknowledge the earth as an integral part of native cultures’ collective past, present and future.

Building this 21st Century Promontory Mound involved thorough planning, innovative engineering and the use of incredibly technological tools in order to execute successful construction. The result is a culmination of efforts among Centennial Builders, Cardinal Engineering Inc., Sherwood Construction Co. Inc., and Drs. Jim Laguros and Jerry Miller from the University of Oklahoma. “The logistical and design difficulties involved in hauling over 500,000 cubic yards of earth and placing it in such a way that it would remain stable have been overwhelming challenges at times. The smallest incremental alteration would have resulted in large overall changes and costs. Designing and working on the promontory has given me an appreciation for the American Indians on this continent who built mounds of this nature hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years ago, without sophisticated engineering techniques and without heavy equipment,” comments Neil Robinson, Assistant Director, Cardinal Engineering, Inc.

“New GPS technology and large earth moving equipment made our work much simpler than the former mound builders would have experienced. The unique shape of the promontory created an interesting challenge for the construction team. Because of the steep varying slopes, we installed a geogrid and wire basket earth-form system to stabilize the interior face of the promontory; and thanks to the GPS system, no stakes were needed. It is probably the first time this system has been used in Oklahoma. says Rod Evans, Project Manager, Sherwood Construction Co., Inc.

Chris Pribil, Project Executive, Centennial Builders, highlights some interesting facts about the construction of the mound, “This represents a major milestone in the construction schedule as the Central Promontory takes its final shape and size. To date we have moved over 42,000 truckloads of soil to build the 1.7 billion pound structural earth form. We now move into a new phase for the promontory, where we will be installing an irrigation system and seeding the promontory mound with over 10 surface acres of Native Grass seeds.”

The American Indian Cultural Center & Museum includes a 125,000 square foot museum on a 300-acre site located on river trust property donated by the City of Oklahoma City. It will also include a landscaped Park and Trails System, a privately developed Commercial Enterprise/Arts Marketplace, and a Visitor Center that will be completed at the end of September.

The NACEA has positively advanced the creation of this new institution by assembling a world-class design and planning team. This project team has invested a significant amount of time and resources with American Indian communities to ensure that interior, exterior, architectural design, exhibit design, and institutional plans appropriately reflect the values and ethos of the tribes throughout the state. **Project Team:** State of Oklahoma/DCS, Owner; ADG/Greeby, Agency Representative; Johnson Fain, Team Leader, Master Planning, Building Concepts; Hornbeek/Blatt Architects, Project Administration and Liaison; Centennial Builders, Construction Manager at Risk; Ralph Appelbaum Associates, Exhibit Design, Thematic Approach and Interpretive Concepts; LORD Cultural Resources Planning & Management Inc., Museum and Institutional Planning; Cardinal Engineering Inc., Civil Engineers; Hargreaves Associates, Landscape Architects.

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