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Editors Note: AICC logo and renderings available

GROUNDBLESSING CEREMONY PLANNED TO INAUGURATE SITE OF AMERICAN INDIAN CULTURAL CENTER

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK (October 14, 2005) – As American Indian Heritage month approaches, Oklahoma City will soon have another exciting reason to celebrate Native American culture. On Tuesday, November 1, 2005, the Native American Cultural and Educational Authority (NACEA) will host a Groundblessing Ceremony to celebrate and prepare the site of the American Indian Cultural Center. When completed, the center will be a world-class museum designed to celebrate the history and flourishing contemporary cultures of Oklahoma's 39 unique tribes.

“This is an exciting moment for everyone involved,” said Tommy Thompson, Executive Director of the NACEA. “After many years of planning, we are so pleased to see the American Indian Cultural Center finally come to life.”

The grassroots effort to create a community space celebrating Oklahoma's diverse Indian tribes began almost thirty years ago. However it took legislation, created by Sens. Kelly Haney and Robert M. Kerr, to bring the museum to reality. In 1994, the Oklahoma State Legislature authorized creation of the NACEA to design, construct and operate an American Indian Cultural Center and Museum. The land for the Center site was donated by the City of Oklahoma City in 1998. In May 2005, the state passed a \$33 million bond, which secured the funding necessary to allow building to begin.

The Center, designed by Johnson Fain Partners and Hornbeek Blatt Architects, will be located at the southeast corner of the I-35 and I-40 intersection in Oklahoma City. Planned features include a Hall of the People, a Promontory Walk, and a Community Forum. The exhibits, designed by Ralph Appelbaum Associates, are dedicated to overarching themes important to American Indian culture such as community, memory, and sovereignty. The American Indian Cultural Center, which will be affiliated with Smithsonian programs, also plans to join with local and national arts and cultural organizations to host educational programs and special events.

This site was once an oil drilling field, so November 1, 2005 will not just celebrate breaking ground, it will be a special time to offer gratitude and blessings to heal the land before construction begins. The NACEA has planned several activities to celebrate the day; including private spiritual blessings by Oklahoma's tribal representatives, social dancing, the official Groundblessing Ceremony, and a fireworks display.

“This Groundblessing Ceremony is just the beginning in a series of exciting events that will

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bring a greater understanding of the American Indian experience and culture, so it is only fitting that it is on November 1st to kick off the many American Indian Heritage Month celebrations taking place throughout Oklahoma and the rest of the nation,” said Gena Timberman Howard, Deputy Director of the NACEA. “When completed, the American Indian Cultural Center will provide a place for all Oklahoma tribes to share their story and celebrate who Native people are today.”

Corporate and individual sponsorships for American Indian Cultural Center are still available. For detailed information, contact Gena Timberman Howard at (405) 815-5129.

The public is invited to view the fireworks display, which will begin at 6:00 p.m., from Oklahoma City’s Regatta Park, located on Byers Avenue, just two blocks south of I-44.

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