

AMERICAN INDIAN CULTURAL CENTER & MUSEUM

A project of the Native American Cultural & Educational Authority

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<http://www.aiccm.org/image-downloads>

PROGRESS CONTINUES - WRITTEN IN STONE

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK (August 31, 2010) – On July 22, 2010 at 8:30 a.m. the final stones were symbolically positioned on the North wall of the two East Gate Entry walls at the American Indian Cultural Center & Museum located at the intersection of (I-35 & I-40), 659 American Indian Boulevard, Oklahoma City, OK 73129. The completion of the East Gate Entry demonstrates the continued progress being made and represents the commitment to complete this important development, even in challenging times.

Native peoples have always recounted history, communicated beliefs and shared values through the art of storytelling. Sometimes this was conveyed through oral traditions, other times important lessons or occasions were recorded in petroglyphs, incorporated into weavings, pottery and beadwork designs. This pre-writing could be easily interpreted by those capable of reading this visual language. The East Gate Entry continues this storytelling tradition as the stone walls convey an important story while welcoming and guiding guests into the cultural center experience. The East Gate entrance is a 113' walk through two dramatic inclining stone walls rising to 40'. The intricate Mesquabuck stone possesses several subtle and compelling attributes. The East Gate walls align precisely with the sunrise of the March (Vernal) and September (Autumnal) Equinoxes, with the sun rising directly in the center of the gate on these astronomically significant days. Executive director Gena Timberman comments, "This distinctive architectural feature reflects building traditions from throughout the Americas dating back millennia which also positioned prominent structures to correlate with astronomical events, such times of equinox and solstice."

The Mesquabuck stone, characterized by its visible red and white strata, carries the name of the Potawatomi chief Mes'k wah-buk, whose name signifies the red color of the sky at sunrise and sunset. Board member David Campbell, recommended that the Mesquabuck stone be used says, "This was quarried in Southeast Oklahoma, the Mesquabuck stone is from the Ouachita sediment of the Pennsylvanian Period, dating the stones back approximately 300 million years." Chosen for their splendor and durability, each of the stones in the wall holds a deeper reverence in their honoring of the ancestors of American Indian people in Oklahoma whose perseverance and resilience through tragedy and triumph has enabled these Native cultures to not only survive in Oklahoma but also to succeed as independent sovereign nations.

The stones are a tribute to those who were indigenous to the geographic region now known as Oklahoma while also honoring the ancestors who made the courageous journey from their tribal homelands from throughout North America to what was then known as "Indian Territory." The varying sizes of the stones symbolize the unique characteristics of these individuals and their distinct cultural traditions, as well as the diverse intergenerational relationships among these tribal peoples. All who pass through the AICCM's East Gate move through this powerful intersection of cultural importance will also marvel at craftsmanship that distinguishes this poignant architectural tribute to the unprecedented convergence of 67 American Indian cultures in Oklahoma.

Project Scope: The American Indian Cultural Center & Museum includes a 125,000 square foot cultural center and museum on a 250 acre cultural park located on the Oklahoma River. The site was donated by the City of Oklahoma City and is an ideal location with significant traffic volume and high visibility. The project will also include privately-funded business enterprises such as an arts marketplace and conference center and a centralized visitor information center. **Project Team:** Johnson Fain and Hornbeek/Blatt Co-prime Architects, 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, Civil Engineers; Hargreaves Associates, Landscape Design and Architectural Design Group, Owners Representative.