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AICCM and NMAI Begin a Reciprocal Relationship

The American Indian Cultural Center & Museum (AICCM), located in the geographic center of the continent and the heart of Indian country, and the National Museum of the American Indian, the sixteenth Smithsonian Institution anchored on the National Mall in Washington D.C. sign a historic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on April 27, 2007 cultivating a complementary alignment. A media conference is scheduled for **April 27, 2007 at 1:00 p.m.** at the **American Indian Cultural Center & Museum construction site, 659 American Indian Boulevard (formerly Eastern Avenue) Oklahoma City, OK 73117.** ([Maplink](#)) All media and visitors are asked to check in at the Centennial Builders office trailers on site. (Enter construction site, veer left at fork in road, to trailers.) Contact person: Shoshana Wasserman, Director of Marketing and Development (AICCM) shoshanaw@aiccm.org (405) 651.8900. *In the event of inclement weather, the media conference will be held at the Oklahoma Department of Commerce Lobby in front of the architectural model. 900 N. Stiles Avenue, Oklahoma City Oklahoma, 73104.*

The AICCM and NMAI are institutions dedicated to advancing knowledge and understanding of Native cultures. Each supports the continuance of Native culture, traditional values, and contemporary lifeways. This formal relationship expresses a commitment to identify areas that warrant special attention for shared efforts, and to specify mechanisms for cooperation and communication.

In 1994 the Oklahoma Legislature created the Native American Cultural & Educational Authority (NACEA), a state agency authorized to construct and operate the AICCM. The AICCM is committed to communicating the story of the 67 tribes that have a historic relationship to Indian Territory and the state of Oklahoma. It will offer a unique account of tribes that journeyed from ancestral homelands and nurture the creation of traditional cultural arts and their contemporary expression, without becoming a collections-based museum. Instead it will cradle intangible cultural heritage as a living breathing museum that facilitates the ongoing documentation and discussion of American Indian peoples' history and culture. "This relationship with the Smithsonian is a very significant step in creating a truly world-class cultural center and museum. The Smithsonian brings much more than vast collections, incredible research capabilities and tremendous knowledge to this partnership. It also brings an undying commitment to fulfill the mission of its founder James Smithson, who established the institution for the increase and diffusion of knowledge," says Bill Anoatubby, (Chickasaw) Governor of the Chickasaw Nation and Chairman of the (NACEA) Board of Directors.

NMAI was established by an act of Congress in 1989. The museum works in collaboration with the Native peoples of the Western Hemisphere to protect and foster their cultures by reaffirming

traditions and beliefs, encouraging contemporary artistic expression, and empowering the Indian voice. The museum's extensive collections, assembled largely by George Gustav Heye (1874–1957), encompass a vast range of cultural material—including more than 800,000 works of extraordinary aesthetic, religious, and historical significance, as well as articles produced for everyday utilitarian use. The collections span all major culture areas of the Americas, representing virtually all tribes of the United States, most of those of Canada, and a significant number of cultures from Central and South America as well as the Caribbean.

“The beauty of this symbiotic relationship is the way each museum is enhanced by the relationship. NMAI has an amazing collection, significant conservation resources, training programs, technical assistance, educational curriculum and exhibit development resources that will be of tremendous support to AICCM as we create a new cultural center. In contrast, AICCM is located in close proximity to many of the tribes represented in the NMAI collection and we can be a conduit to help identify appropriate tribal cultural and spiritual leaders that can positively impact the way the NMAI collection is understood and cared for in the future,” says Shoshana Wasserman, (Muscogee, Creek) Director of Marketing and Development, (AICCM).

NMAI reunites a certain percentage of its objects to the tribe of origin, adding contextual meaning to the collection. Rick West (Southern Cheyenne), Founding Director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian comments, “The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian is deeply committed to establish, build, and maintain mutual relationships with Native cultural centers and museums in order to share our collection, scholarship and resources with communities. This relationship extends past the physical confines of our museum walls and directly into Indian Country where traditional and contemporary art and culture meet and are shared with those who visit your facilities.”

Ralph Appelbaum Associates, the world's premiere museum interpretive design firm is employing its international expertise to help develop the story with the most compelling techniques and approaches to sharing a complex and culturally rich history. Ralph Appelbaum, Appelbaum Associates comments, "This generous act of sharing national collections with the American Indian peoples of Oklahoma gives tribal elders new ways to tell their stories to new generations in the heartland of tribal life. What a gift and noble achievement! We all owe our thanks to Rick West, Founding Director of the National Museum of the American Indian, and Governor Bill Anoatubby of the Chickasaw Nation , who on behalf of the tribal leaders of Oklahoma, created a model that will enrich and brighten our Nation's understanding of the those who loved this land first and so deeply.”