



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



THE PERRY CENTER FOR NATIVE AMERICAN ART DESIGNED WITH INDIGENOUS INPUT

DESIGN REFLECTS TALKING CIRCLES WITH CULTURE BEARERS

SHELBURNE, Vermont (Sept. 26, 2024) In planning for the Perry Center for Native American Art, Shelburne Museum was intentional in collaborating with Tribal Nations and culture bearers whose works are represented in the museum’s collection. The result is a building and integrated landscape design that honors the traditional stewards of the site and is referential to the many cultures whose items will be housed in the Center.

“When the idea for the Perry Center for Native American Art was just taking shape, we knew that collaboration with Tribal Nations would be central to every aspect of the project from concept to design to programming,” said Thomas Denenberg, John Wilmerding Director and CEO. “To date more than 75 Native American culture bearers and other authorities, many of whom participated in Talking Circles, collaborated with us—and their input is evident in the Perry Center’s design. But this is just the beginning, the museum is committed to continuous strengthening and building of authentic relationships with Native American communities across the country and dedicated to reciprocity between the museum and these Tribal Nations.”

(MORE)



The Perry Center is being designed by Annum Architects of Boston and Two Row Architect of Six Nations of the Grand River First Nation with Reed Hilderbrand of Cambridge, Massachusetts, as landscape architect.

In addition to collaboration among the architects, important insight and guidance about the building and landscape design was taken from Talking Circles—a series of six listening sessions—that included leadership and culture bearers of the local Abenaki, the traditional care takers of the site, along with Tribal Nations represented in the museum’s collection of more than 500 items.

"Input gathered from the Talking Circles conducted by Two Row Architect was invaluable as we worked toward a design that considered the Indigenous peoples who are the traditional stewards of the site and the Tribal Nations whose items will be housed in the Perry Center," said Elizabeth Randall, principal at Reed Hilderbrand. "In approaching the site design for the Perry Center, we were mindful of how the landscape is as meaningful and important as the building."

The design of the Perry Center building is influenced by traditional Native American structures, and the landscape surrounding the Center is intentionally integrated into the overall design of the building. The building itself is curvilinear referencing Indigenous building types. The interior is responsive to the changing elevation of the landscape with a floor that gently ramps down on the north end, allowing for visitors to move onto the upper landscape terrace without requiring stairs.

Features of the Perry Center that reflect the needs of Indigenous cultures include:

- an east-facing entrance in alignment with values in many Indigenous cultures including Abenaki;

(MORE)



- an orientation space with an oculus or skylight that lets light into the space and serves as a connection to the sky above, an important consideration in many cultures;
- a housing area designed for collection care with a separate room designed for visiting Tribal members or researchers to view items and conduct cultural practices, either in person or virtually;
- lawn landscape terrace with a gathering circle, formed of local stone;
- visible rainwater features acknowledging the importance of water in many cultures as a component of all living things.

As with the architecture of the building itself, important insight and guidance about how the building would integrate with the landscape was taken from Talking Circles that helped clarify key principles that guided the careful selection of the building's site.

The Perry Center will nestle the forest's edge, across from the Pizzagalli Center for Art and Education. Considerations for the landscape design include:

- preserving as many existing trees as possible including a cluster of cedars that hold meaning in Abenaki culture;
- planting native tree species with habitat value and medicinal properties, as well as adaptability to climate change. In addition to oaks and pines, the plant palette will include birches, American hornbeam and shadbush, among others;
- reusing soil removed for the new building to shape terraces with spaces for gathering, places for art installation, future garden areas and moments for private reflection;

(MORE)



- collecting rainwater from the roof and feeding it through a system of planted, stone-rimmed swales to a sweetgrass garden at the base of the ridge, a recognition of the importance of water as a universal, infinite component of all living things, constantly in cycle.

About Shelburne Museum: Shelburne Museum is the largest art and history museum in northern New England and Vermont’s foremost public resource for programming in the arts and humanities. Incorporated in 1947, the museum comprises 39 buildings and 22 gardens on a 45-acre campus. The museum stewards a collection of over 100,000 objects in unique and unparalleled installations of American art and material culture. Programming includes exhibitions and educational programs designed to creatively engage a broad spectrum of audiences and spark conversation and contemplation about the human condition.

About Annum Architects: Annum Architects’ (previously Ann Beha Architects) projects explore the discourse between heritage and the future to establish new identities and settings for arts, education and the civic realm. The firm’s design honors include awards from the Boston Society of Architects, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Society for College and University Planning and the American Institute of Architects. Based in Boston and practicing worldwide, Annum is a minority-owned firm with a diverse and inclusive studio culture.
annumarchitects.com

About Two Row Architect: Established in 1992 by principal Architect Brian Porter (OnAyota'a:ka), Two Row Architect is a 100% native-owned business operated from the Six Nations of the Grand River First Nation. Since its inception in 1992, the firm has focused on providing services to projects for Indigenous clients as well as those that incorporate Indigenous

(MORE)



cultural ideologies and teachings manifested in architectural form. The firm's focus is on guiding the realignment of mainstream ways of thinking on a journey towards Indigenous ways of knowing, being, design and architecture. The firm's ultimate goal is to promote architecture that has a positive impact on nature, humanity and our current sense of civilization.

About Reed-Hilderbrand: Reed Hilderbrand practices landscape architecture as an act of purposeful transformation. Now in its third decade, Reed Hilderbrand is engaged on commissions for Tekakawimək Contact Station at Katahdin Woods & Waters National Monument, Storm King Art Center and Longwood Gardens. Regional projects completed by Reed Hilderbrand include Bennington College and the grounds of the Clark Art Institute. The American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) named Reed Hilderbrand the 2013 Landscape Architecture Firm of the Year.

IMAGE: View of Perry Center for Native American Art at Shelburne Museum along new landscaped pathway looking south. Image: Annum Architects.

LINK: to high res images:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/tofqambpch65gquv7ttz9/AE9cKbbgI0r2Wl0Skv2pamQ?rlkey=a1hrl7cw1mfeaq3ap44b4ilbk&st=mqf4odcs&dl=0>

For media inquiries, please contact:

Leslie Wright
Director of Communications and Marketing
Shelburne Museum
lwright@shelburnemuseum.org
802-985-0880

Kristen Levesque
Kristen Levesque Public Relations
kristen@kristenlevesquepr.com

###