

What's Happening on the Hill

submitted by Mike Alloway, FCP Museum Director



A view of the west side of the museum under construction.



Hard hat area in the construction zone.

Forest County Potawatomi Cultural Center, Library and Museum

In spring of 1995, the idea for a Cultural Center and Museum was presented by Hazel George and Clarice Werle to members of the general council. The idea, backed with our tribal constitution which delegates the executive council the power to "encourage preservation of Potawatomi arts, crafts, traditions and culture" along with the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act a.k.a. NAGPRA solidified the tribes' decision to construct such a facility.

The act, commonly known as Public Law 101-601, was signed into law on November 16, 1990, by former President George H.W. Bush that provided a process for museums and federal agencies to return certain Native American cultural items - human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony - to lineal descendants, culturally affiliated Indian tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations.

Funded with an ANA Grant and tribal matching dollars, the Forest County Potawatomi Community broke ground on June 22, 1998, with dedication of the Cultural Center and Museum on October 15, 1999.

Since opening, the center has provided the community with weekly on-going class instruction on the Potawatomi language and prior offerings on basket weaving, miniature to full scale model canoe building, regalia making, flute making, moccasins, dance bustles, ribbon applique, copper bowls and so on with proposed pottery and black ash basket classes for the spring and summer months.

The main gallery at 2,700 square feet of

circular space encompasses a variety of information via text panels which are bilingual with the inclusion of contemporary and historical photograph reproductions, audio/visual interactive kiosks and artwork; sharing with many visitors the language and life-ways of the Forest County Potawatomi Community. The exhibit content was made possible by members of the community through focus groups and carried out by Derse Museum Group of Milwaukee, Wisconsin as the designers. The exhibition opened its doors to the public in November 2002.

Resources today have enabled our ability to spread our wings a bit and offer more to our community. The addition's lower level will house proper archival and artifacts storage systems (climate-controlled), language office and classrooms, maintenance office and workshop areas, along with a dark room and photography studios.

The upper level boasts a much larger gift shop offering a better variety of goods, staff offices; including Tribal Enrollment, an east side walkout deck with outdoor fireplace from the heart of the project...the Forest County Potawatomi Kakendawen Library. The library will have an array of Native American literature both fiction and non-fiction along with computer terminals available to the community for studying and research.

Contractor for the project is The Selmer Co. of Green Bay with Barrientos Design as Architects and Irgens Development Partners as Owners Representatives all from Milwaukee.

Look for the grand opening in late July 2007.

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