

PRESS RELEASE: WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2019

Pawnee Nation and Museum Board Partner with National Association in Development of Prototype for Native Cultural Center Design.

The Pawnee Nation and Museum Board have joined the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums, (ATALM), OSU School of Architecture, and the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indian's Culture Center and Museum staff to engage in the development of a prototype model which may be utilized by any tribal community for reducing costs and expediting the planning and design of their respective cultural facilities. ATALM is a national, Native-serving non-profit organization whose purpose is to provide sustainable infrastructures to indigenous tribes to ensure the continuation of their culturally relevant training and networking programs in preserving and advancing their Native culture, history, language, and lifeways.

ATALM has enlisted the volunteer participation of design-build architects with experience in Native cultural building projects as well as fourth-year OSU architectural students and faculty to work with the Pawnee Nation tribal leadership and their newly formed Museum Design Advisory Committee (MDAC), along with the Culture Center and Museum staff from the Keetoowah Tribe, to develop the initial prototype model. The team will develop prototype plans that may be adapted by Native communities seeking to build cultural centers that authentically interpret their culture, history and lifeways. "The overarching goal of the project is to enable Native communities of all sizes to realize their goals to develop and build cost-effective cultural centers by reducing their architectural design and development costs utilizing the process, procedures and designs developed through this model project," said Susan Feller, President of ATALM and Project Coordinator.

The project officially launched today when 28 fourth-year O.S.U. architecture students and their faculty met with ATALM leaders, members of the Pawnee Nation Museum Design Advisory Committee (MDAC) and other tribal leaders to begin the development of interpretive conceptual design(s) for its cultural center. The following Friday the group will visit the Keetoowah's Cultural Center and Museum to study building design features at their Tahlequah site. "This collaboration will provide the students with experience working with Native populations, will help ATALM develop and test resources to be freely shared with all Native communities, and will enable the Pawnee Nation to expedite the process of developing their own Cultural Center in future years," said Ms. Feller.

"This is a unique opportunity for our students and the OSU School of Architecture that fulfills each arm of the OSU land grant mission: research, education, and outreach. Partnering with a national tribal-serving association and Oklahoma Tribes to develop a prototype model for use across the country allows us to employ teaching techniques such as the Participatory Design Model (PDM) to cultivate collaborative learning communities. Designing with the community rather than designing for the community is the critical difference in the PDM. It does not dictate design but creates an environment that allows it to emerge thru the process and interactions with the end-users and the community." said Awilda Rodríguez Carrión, Associate Professor, College of Engineering, Architecture and Technology, OSU.

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