

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT
DR. JON. E. QUISTGAARD

Those associated with Bemidji State University for as long as I have been understand the particular significance of this moment. It is the time when the University's commitment to American Indian people in general, and students in particular, beats with new life from the literal and figurative heart of our campus. The AIRC represents perseverance and resolve in never abandoning dreams.

The American Indian Resource Center is a beautiful facility that will become a destination point for BSU. The building, from its sensitive facade to functional interior, has elicited positive comments from nearly all who have walked around the structure or entered the Great Hall.

As the only new construction on campus in over a decade, the Center is a major addition to the BSU master facilities plan.

But it is so much more than a building.

The American Indian Resource Center is important for many reasons. It will enhance educational opportunities for Native Americans, and strengthen the education of all students. It will create a depository for historical, political and cultural information valued by the American Indian population. It will become a resource where research will be completed, issues discussed, and ideas formulated.

As I stated after the construction began, "It will be more than a place where classes are held, counseling takes place, and students meet. The walls of the Center will not be barricades, isolating students or separating cultures. Instead, the facility will be a vehicle to remove barriers and present students, faculty, staff and the public with new opportunities for learning, interaction and engagement."

The significance of the AIRC is not in the fact that construction is now finished; instead, the AIRC will find meaning from what takes place inside its walls.

It will recognize the continuing contributions of Indian people to learning, knowledge and wisdom.

It will bring together the dreams and aspirations of many people and transform them into reality.

It will foster better community building and collaborations in creating a future that respects the traditions of Indian people.

It will enable the University to better focus its resources and commitments in understanding issues and challenges that directly affect Indian people.

The American Indian Center will succeed in doing all these because of the partnerships that were forged to make it a reality. The Center would not exist today without the political and financial support of the state's tribal leaders. It would not be here without the work of legislators, past and present, who appropriated initial funding. The AIRC could not have been finished without the contributions of foundations, tribal governments, organizations and individuals. It would not exist without the commitment faculty and staff expressed to the value of its programming and the service to students. And it may never have even started without the intense belief by American Indian alumni, whose hope guided the University through all phases of the project.

The American Indian Resource Center will prove, over time, that it is truly a building for all people.



American Indian Resource Center
Donors Includes all donors since inception of project.

\$150,000 and above
The George W. Neilson Foundation

\$100,000 - \$149,000
Otto Bremer Foundation

\$50,000 - \$99,000
Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians

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The Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation

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\$25,000 - \$49,000
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White Earth Reservation Tribal Council

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BEMIDJI STATE UNIVERSITY
American Indian Resource Center



If you don't dream, if you don't have a vision, nothing will ever happen. Those early people were dreamers and visionaries who set us on a path leading to where we are now. And what's been constructed today is a bigger building with a bigger mission than they ever envisioned.

Lee Cook

The 1960s held interesting years. For the country, they were a time of love, a time of war. For people, it was a decade driven by tumult, a decade in search of peace. For society, the 1960s came in like a satisfied lamb and went out like a wounded lion.

Above all, it was a decade of change.

At the start of 1960, Bemidji State University was just over 40 years old and had been led by two presidents. It had three different presidents and another acting president in the 1960s alone. The school hit the 4,000 student mark for the first time. Three residence halls, Walnut Hall, the Hobson Memorial Union, Sattgast Hall, Bridgeman Hall, the John Glas Fieldhouse, and the A.C. Clark Library all were completed by 1970.

Nestled within those years was a discussion of a new academic program, one that would enable Bemidji State to better serve the area's American Indian population. The discussion was lengthy, lasting from 1962 to 1969, when the Indian Studies degree was formally added to the curriculum.

An Indian Studies Center was added a year later and located within the University's academic buildings. Almost immediately, attention focused on securing a facility to serve as a home for BSU's Native American offerings, cultural activities, and outreach efforts.

The American Indian Resource Center, officially dedicated at Bemidji State University on October 4, 2003, is the result of work by many people and organizations over 35 years to bring a dream to reality.

"If you don't dream, if you don't have a vision, nothing will ever happen," said Lee Cook, director of the American Indian Resource Center (AIRC). "Those early people were dreamers and visionaries who set us on a path leading to where we are now. And what's been constructed today is a bigger building with a bigger mission than they ever envisioned."

The American Indian Resource Center is located in the heart of the BSU 89-acre campus, adjacent to Diamond Point Park and at the west end of Chet Anderson Stadium. The 10,667 square-foot facility includes offices for Center staff as well as faculty in Indian Studies and Ojibwe language. It features classrooms, a kitchen, meeting rooms, study cubicles, exhibit areas, and a gathering space that is being called, for the moment, the Great Hall.

Funding was provided by the Minnesota Legislature with additional resources provided by foundations, tribal governments, and many individuals and groups.

The AIRC's location is also something Cook would point out to the early proponents of such a building.

"If it ever came to reality, most people felt it would be an appendage to the campus, set off at one end or the other," he said. "It's the perfect setting. It is certainly representative of the environmental thinking of most woodlands tribes, who are water people and woods people."

"No one could have envisioned that it would be at the center of everything – physically and programmatically. This means a lot, and says a lot about this campus."

The AIRC fulfills a long-recognized need on campus, that a space be created where American Indian students could gather for learning, support, and cultural interaction. The ultimate goal would be to enhance the recruitment, retention and graduation of American Indian students.

But the Center will do more than serve American Indian Students. Its reach will extend across campus, to the Native American population within the state, and to Indian people across the country.

"This is a facility to house dialog and discussion and discourse and learning and sharing," Cook commented. "We'll sponsor workshops for the campus and general public. We'll have art and artifact displays. There will be cultural and academic programs in art, music, teaching, film, language, and much more. Once we queue people's interest, they will come and see it's not intimidating. I want the learning for non-Indians to be nurturing and of interest."

Beyond the campus, the AIRC can fill a crucial role in

serving the region's American Indian population. The BSU campus is centrally located between three of the state's largest reservations and has established relationships with tribal colleges and governments.

Discussions about expanding Bemidji State's participation have been ongoing with the tribal colleges, where BSU has been supporting accreditation efforts, delivery of courses, and staff development. With interactive capabilities, distance learning opportunities, and enhanced partnerships, the University can play a larger role in helping the tribal colleges attain their mission while

pursuing its own goal of graduating American Indian students to enter the workforce in tribal governments, public sector, or private enterprises.

The Center is also envisioned as a gathering place where American Indian issues like sovereignty and health care can be explored by diverse groups. It will be available to campus as well as external organizations for a variety of uses.

"Former President Lyndon Johnson used to say, 'Let's sit down and reason together,' and that's what the Center really implies to me," said Cook. "It will be a way for Indian and non-Indian people with varied and interesting backgrounds to reason together on history, culture, and many other topics. It will be a constantly comfortable environment to discuss, learn, appreciate, and have a dialog about differences."

The Great Hall will be the centerpiece of this effort. An oval shaped room of over 2,500 square feet and with its own fireplace, the hall is being compared to the grand council room in the Native American tradition. Men and women would gather in grand council to talk, make decisions, and select leadership.

Those who worked on the Center realize the amount of dialog, discussion and commitment needed to move the idea into a plan and then to reality. It took commitment from the University, state government, tribal leaders, and American Indian graduates.

"This center is a compliment to the community, campus, tribal leaders, past BSU presidents, and a whole lot of alumni," Cook added. "They had been dreaming a long time, and didn't believe it was a pipe dream. It's now here. It is real and operating. It will be creating a presence for Indian people for many years to come."

Catching a Dream

American Indian Resource Center
CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE

The following are former members or have served at some time on the committee.
Bobby Whitefeather
Jim Bensen
John Buckanaga
Eli Hunt
Paul Welle
Carol Russell
Melanie Benjamin
Doyle Turner
Jon Quistgaard
Gerald Brun

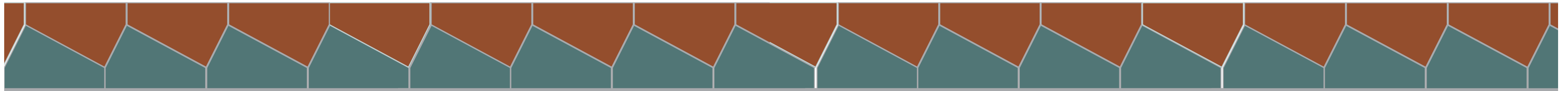
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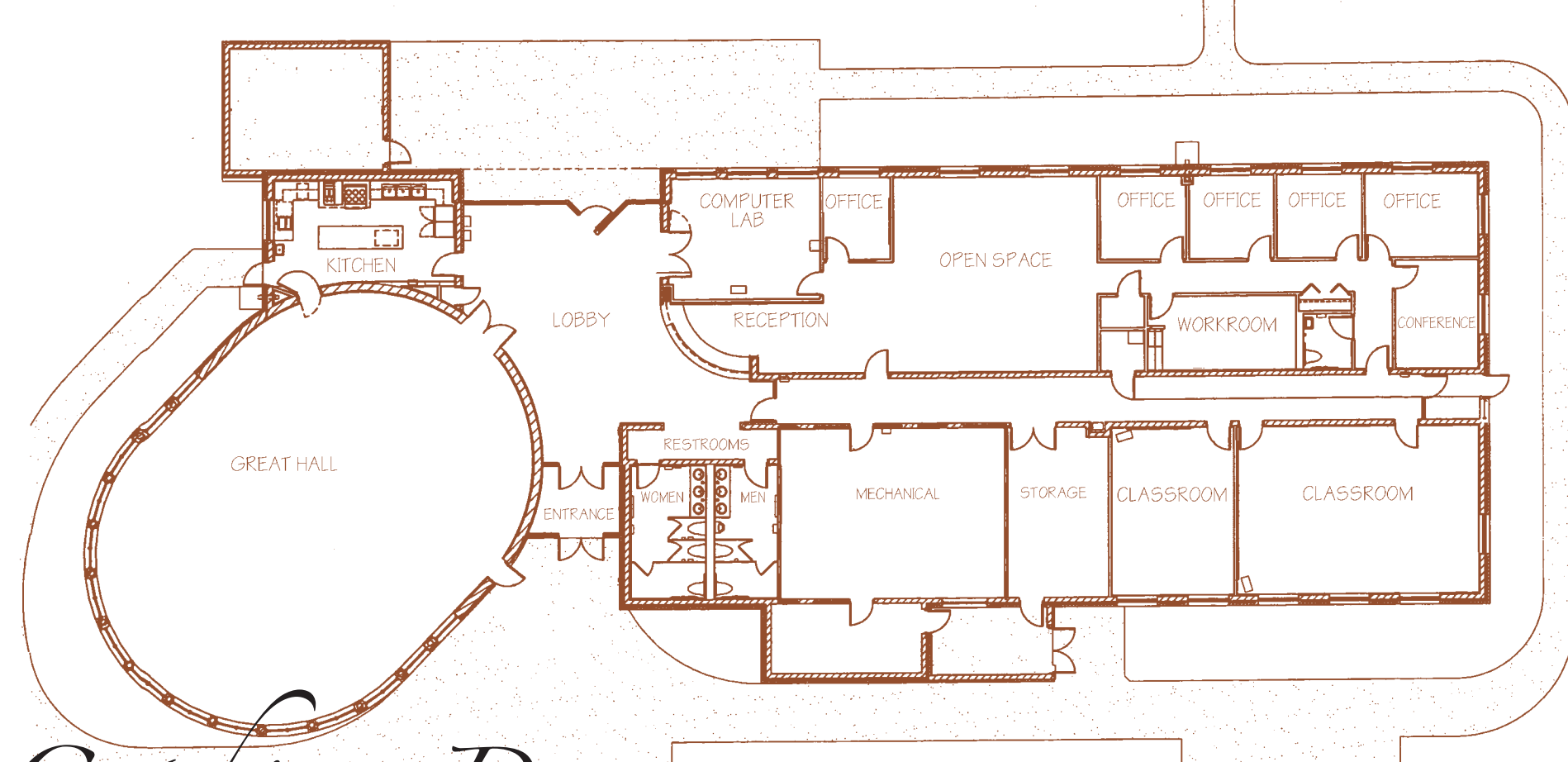
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The Great Hall (far right): fireplace and decorative detail (above and right).

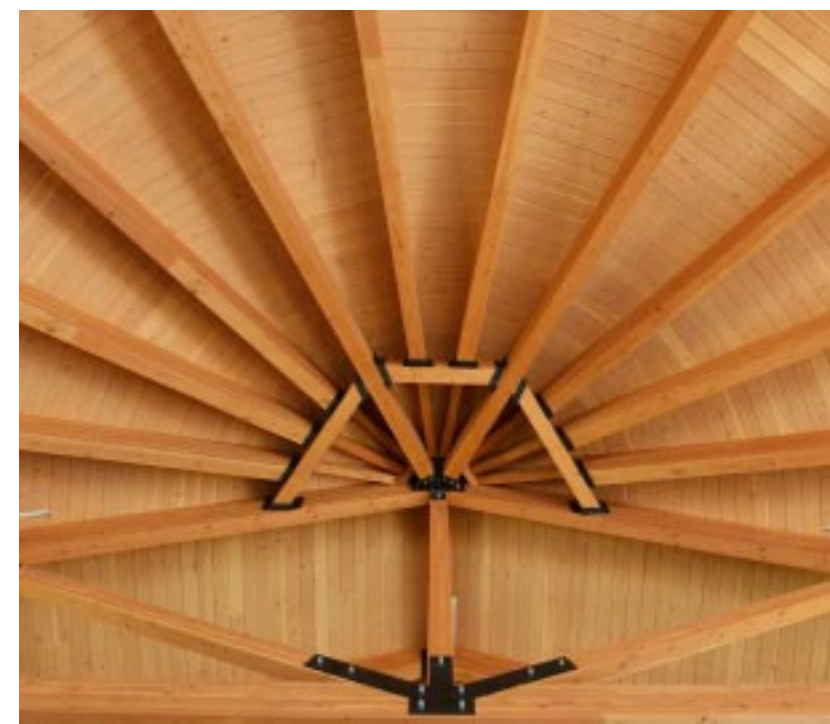


BEMIDJI STATE UNIVERSITY American Indian Resource Center



Catching a Dream

BUILDING THE AIRC
AmerINDIAN Architecture designed the American Indian Resource Center. Based in St. Paul, AmerINDIAN Architecture specializes in designs sensitive to Native American culture, art and traditions. Its credits include buildings for many Indian people, including the Sioux, HoChunk, Chippewa, Arapahoe, Omaha, and Hopi. Dave Bryan served as the architect on the AIRC. General contractor for the project was Gordon Construction of Mahanomen.



Clockwise, from left: Ceiling in the Great Hall; kitchen; reception desk; computer room; exterior facing Diamond Point Park; and staff office.

The American Indian Resource Center at BSU... is actually grander than I had expected. Originally, I had envisioned a house that was used as a center for meetings and gatherings. I never imagined that the resources would become available for such an important and beautiful structure.

Colette "Tori" Dahlke
Job Counselor, Minnesota Workforce
BSU Alumna

Native students attending a state higher educational system often feel isolated, alone, and a stranger to the university's curriculum. The AIRC offers a home, a community, a village and a sense of place for many native students at BSU. This will offer a much needed sense of ownership and inclusion in higher education.

Dr. Helen Klassen
President,
White Earth Tribal College

Our American Indian enrollment has declined dramatically in recent years. Now that our 35-year effort has finally been completed, hopefully the enrollment will return to what it once was.

Joe Aitken
Bug-O-Nay-Gee-Shig
School Administrator
BSU Alumnus

BSU has integrated and valued American Indian history, culture, language and traditions for a long time - this re-affirms their commitment that American Indian people are valued and respected on campus and in the community.

Don Day
President, Fond Du Lac
Tribal and Community College
BSU Alumnus

As our region and nation become more diverse we must seize the strengths that all people from different cultures and backgrounds bring. This AIRC can be a forum for discussion on contemporary issues of race and diversity and hopefully lead to a better understanding of different cultures.

Roger D. Moe
Former State Senator who supported the AIRC as Majority Leader

Bemidji State recognizes the importance and impact the Native Americans have on the Bemidji area and surrounding communities. Tribal leaders, members and communities will benefit by having a designated location on the BSU campus for meetings and events.

Gary Donald
Tribal Chairman of Bois Forte

Bemidji State is located in the center of three Reservations and it is my belief that it will be a focal point of those Reservations as well as an attraction for other Reservations. The history and culture of the American Indian in Northern Minnesota is part of our community's heritage and will be a resource for our students, citizens and visitors.

Gail Skare
Former Minnesota State Representative who served the Bemidji area when the Legislature funded the AIRC

This is a complex we can all be proud of. It also will be good for other students to see and learn more about Indians and the culture, especially since BSU trains teachers who need to know about Indian culture. The more we know about others the better people we become.

Barb Smith
BSU Alumna

In the beginning of my involvement, it was a thought of mine that it could become an international resource center, as I know that Canadian native students attend BSU as well. I have observed that the tribal government structures of the various Tribes in the United States and Canada are different from Tribe to Tribe and it would be a good opportunity to learn from one another, and perhaps begin an examination of how various tribal governments work and perhaps do not work. It would also be an excellent training ground for present and future tribal leaders.

Bobby Whitefeather
Past Chairman,
Red Lake Band of Chippewa
BSU Alumnus

The Center will provide a great opportunity for the non-Indian students to learn much about American Indian history, culture and pertinent tribal issues of the day. The Center will host a variety of Tribal educational, cultural events and activities year-around for all students, campus personnel and local communities. The Center's events and presence will provide the other students a better understanding and appreciation of the local and national issues directly relating to American Indians.

Roger T. Aitken
Executive Director,
Midwest Area Sovereign Tribes
BSU Alumnus

I believe students will view it as a place where they can relate to in terms of their culture, their perspective on life and values in general. American Indian students will encounter lifestyles and philosophies in the academic milieu that will differ from theirs. At those times when this occurs, students will find and look to the Center as a place where their values are also endorsed.

Lorena Cook
Assistant to the President,
Affirmative Action Officer, BSU
BSU Alumna