

The National Museum of the American Indian

The Smithsonian Institution's 18th museum—the National Museum of the American Indian—opens Tuesday on the Mall. The \$219 million museum is home to one of the largest and most diverse collections of Indian art and artifacts in the world and will showcase objects representing a 10,000-year time span from the pre-Columbian era through the beginning of the 21st century.

Building a Native Place

A three-year dialogue with native communities and individuals in the United States, Canada and Mexico resulted in the museum's landmark document, "The Way of the People." This became the museum's guide in creating a "living museum" that incorporates native sensibilities throughout the building.

Each phase of construction was led by native design teams in architecture, interior design and landscaping. The museum features the work of Indian craftspeople and artisans, including shell inlay and hand-hewed cedar paneling.

Portions of each permanent exhibit were planned and developed in collaboration with members of native communities; they decided what stories would be told and what objects displayed.

The Landscape

The landscape occupies nearly 74 percent of the museum's 4.25-acre site. It features four ambitious and symbolic habitats that include 700 trees from 25 species and 3,000 shrubs from 25 species; when fully planted, it will contain 27,000 grasses, perennials and other herbaceous plants.

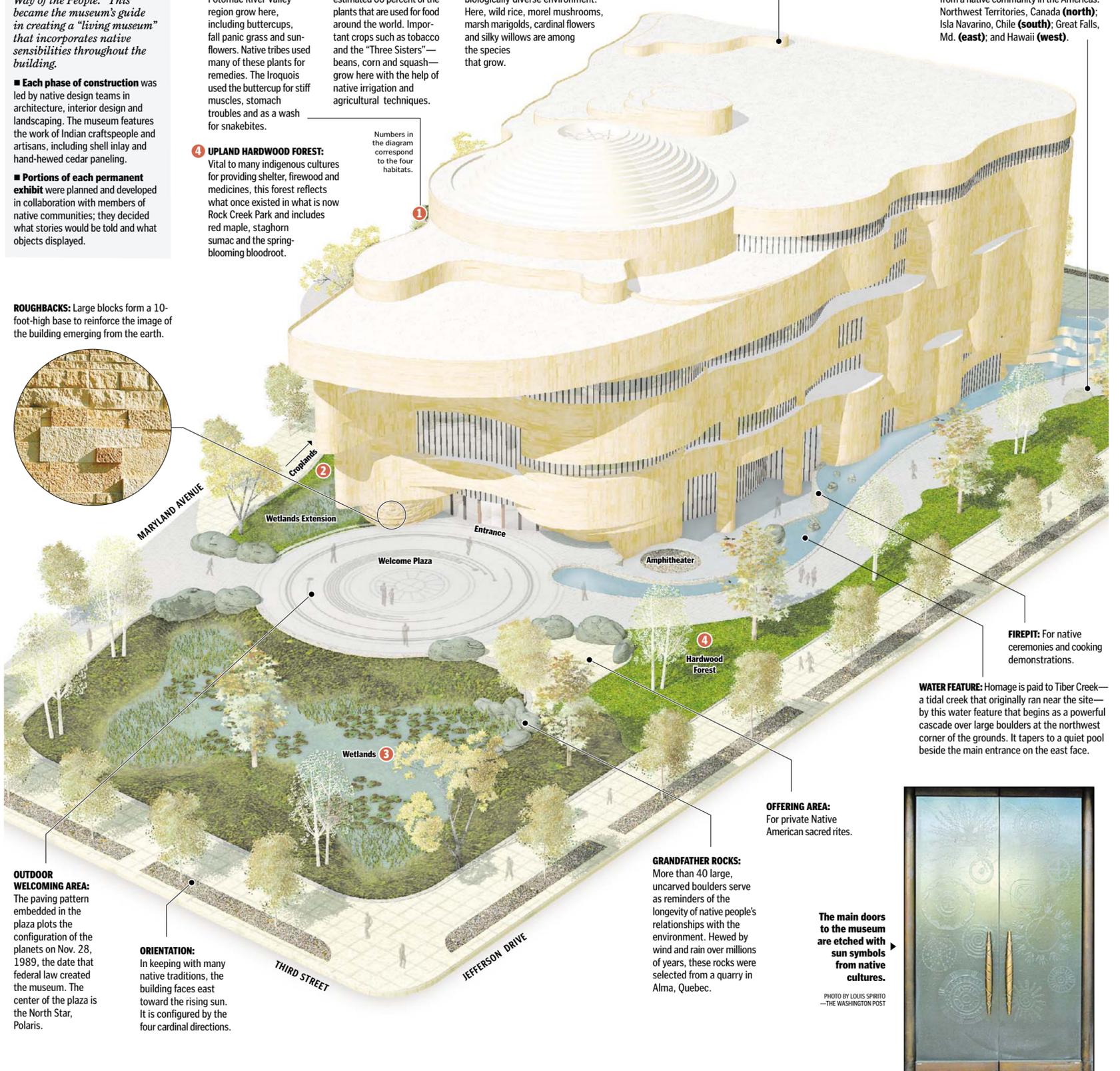
- MEADOWLANDS:** Plant species native to the Potomac River Valley region grow here, including buttercups, fall panic grass and sunflowers. Native tribes used many of these plants for remedies. The Iroquois used the buttercup for stiff muscles, stomach troubles and as a wash for snakebites.
- CROPLANDS:** Indigenous people cultivated an estimated 60 percent of the plants that are used for food around the world. Important crops such as tobacco and the "Three Sisters"—beans, corn and squash—grow here with the help of native irrigation and agricultural techniques.
- WETLANDS:** Culturally important to many tribes because it provided a rich, biologically diverse environment. Here, wild rice, morel mushrooms, marsh marigolds, cardinal flowers and silky willows are among the species that grow.
- UPLAND HARDWOOD FOREST:** Vital to many indigenous cultures for providing shelter, firewood and medicines, this forest reflects what once existed in what is now Rock Creek Park and includes red maple, staghorn sumac and the spring-blooming bloodroot.

Numbers in the diagram correspond to the four habitats.

LIMESTONE EXTERIOR: The five-story curvilinear building is clad in golden-toned Kasota stone, a dolomitic limestone from Minnesota, chosen to evoke the feel of a natural rock formation sculpted over time by wind and water.

CARDINAL DIRECTION MARKERS: A design concept central to the landscape, the markers identify the four cardinal directions and are a metaphor representing all of the indigenous people of the Western Hemisphere. Each comes from a native community in the Americas: Northwest Territories, Canada (**north**); Isla Navarino, Chile (**south**); Great Falls, Md. (**east**); and Hawaii (**west**).

ROUGHBACKS: Large blocks form a 10-foot-high base to reinforce the image of the building emerging from the earth.



OUTDOOR WELCOMING AREA: The paving pattern embedded in the plaza plots the configuration of the planets on Nov. 28, 1989, the date that federal law created the museum. The center of the plaza is the North Star, Polaris.

ORIENTATION: In keeping with many native traditions, the building faces east toward the rising sun. It is configured by the four cardinal directions.

FIREPIT: For native ceremonies and cooking demonstrations.

WATER FEATURE: Homage is paid to Tiber Creek—a tidal creek that originally ran near the site—by this water feature that begins as a powerful cascade over large boulders at the northwest corner of the grounds. It tapers to a quiet pool beside the main entrance on the east face.

OFFERING AREA: For private Native American sacred rites.

GRANDFATHER ROCKS: More than 40 large, uncarved boulders serve as reminders of the longevity of native people's relationships with the environment. Hewed by wind and rain over millions of years, these rocks were selected from a quarry in Alma, Quebec.

The main doors to the museum are etched with sun symbols from native cultures.

PHOTO BY LOUIS SPIRITO—THE WASHINGTON POST



Schedule of Events

On Opening Day Tuesday ...

NATIVE NATIONS PROCESSION

TUESDAY, 9:30 A.M. - NOON
More than 15,000 native people from across the Western Hemisphere, many in traditional clothing, and non-native supporters are expected to participate.

OPENING CEREMONY

NOON - 1 P.M.
Program will include remarks from the National Museum of the American Indian Director W. Richard West Jr., Smithsonian Secretary Lawrence M. Small, Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell and Sen. Daniel K. Inouye. The museum will then officially open to the public. Jumbotrons located throughout the Mall will broadcast this event.

... and Through the Week

FIRST AMERICANS FESTIVAL

TUESDAY, 1 - 5:30 P.M.
WEDNESDAY THROUGH SUNDAY, 10 A.M. - 5:30 P.M.
Free and open to the public. More than 300 performers and artisans from more than 50 tribes and native communities will participate on five stages—traditional and contemporary performances from musicians, dancers and storytellers. The festival will also include native foods and a marketplace with native arts and crafts.

EVENING CONCERT

TUESDAY: 5:30 P.M.
SATURDAY (SEPT. 25): 5:30 P.M.

Opening day hours will be extended. Museum doors will open after the dedication ceremony and remain open all night through 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 22, to accommodate as many visitors as possible. Passes are not required for museum admission after midnight.



For additional information: www.nmai.si.edu

Visiting the Museum

Hours and Passes

Normal hours of operation will be 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily; closed on Dec. 25.

Timed passes are required for admission. **Advance passes:** Available in limited quantities and can be ordered two ways: online by visiting the museum's Web site, www.nmai.si.edu, or by telephone at 866-400-NMAI (6624) (All advance passes—ordered online and by telephone—are administered by Tickets.com). Limit of 10 passes per adult per day; while passes are always free, Tickets.com charges a convenience fee of \$1.75 per ticket plus a \$1.50 service charge per order.

Same-day passes: Free, timed passes will be available in limited quantities on a first-come first-served basis; tickets may be obtained at the museum's east entrance. **On opening day, these passes will be distributed at Fourth Street and Jefferson Drive SW, starting at 9 a.m.** Limit of six passes per adult per day. During opening week, passes will be distributed beginning at 9 a.m.; starting on Sept. 27, passes will be distributed beginning at 10 a.m.

Group passes: For groups of 10 or more (school groups, bus tours), passes are free and administered by the museum directly. The museum's education department will take reservations, call 202-633-6644.

Transportation

Parking is limited on the Mall; visitors are strongly encouraged to take public transportation.

On Metro: L'Enfant Plaza station (all lines except Red); exit Maryland Avenue/Smithsonian Museums.

By Bus: Lines 30, 32, 34-36—Friendship Heights/Southern Avenue.

Visitors

The museum hopes to attract 16,000 visitors a day, or roughly 6 million a year. Visitors can anticipate spending one to two hours at the museum.

Other Facilities

The National Museum of the American Indian on the Mall is one of three related facilities: The George Gustav Heye Center in Lower Manhattan is also a permanent Smithsonian museum; the Cultural Resources Center in Suitland is a collections storage, research and conservation facility that is best visited by appointment.

What's Inside

The collection is regarded as one of the most comprehensive holdings of Indian cultural materials in the world, comprising more than 800,000 objects as well as an archive of 125,000 photographic images—much of it assembled over six decades by a private collector named George Gustav Heye.



George Gustav Heye (1874-1957)

Who was George Heye?

Born in New York to a wealthy family, George Gustav Heye graduated from Columbia College in 1896 with a degree in electrical engineering. While on assignment in Arizona, Heye (pronounced HIGH) acquired a Navajo deerskin shirt, which sparked his interest in Indian artifacts and a decades-long quest to acquire such objects, both spectacular and mundane.



4th Floor

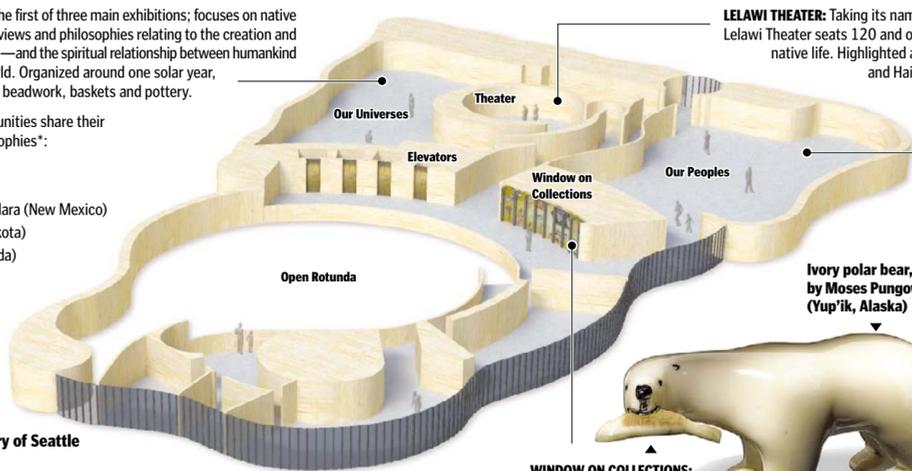


OUR UNIVERSES: The first of three main exhibitions; focuses on native cosmology—worldviews and philosophies relating to the creation and order of the universe—and the spiritual relationship between humankind and the natural world. Organized around one solar year, the exhibit features beadwork, baskets and pottery.

- Eight Native communities share their unique tribal philosophies*:
- Yup'ik (Alaska)
 - Hupa (California)
 - Pueblo of Santa Clara (New Mexico)
 - Lakota (South Dakota)
 - Anishinabe (Canada)
 - Mapuche (Chile)
 - Quechua (Peru)
 - Q'eq'chi' Maya (Guatemala)

Raven Steals the Sun, by Preston Singletary of Seattle (Tlingit tribe)

THE STORY BEHIND THE ART: HOW RAVEN STOLE THE SUN
The Tlingit believe it was Raven who brought order to the world. The stars, moon and sun were locked in boxes by a greedy chief; the pure white Raven plotted to take them away. He transformed himself into the baby of the chief's daughter. The chief loved this baby and did everything in his power to keep the baby from crying. First, he opened the box of stars; then the box with the moon; and finally, the box with the sun. The sun flew out and daylight came into the people's lives. When Raven turned back into a bird, the chief was angry for having been tricked and locked Raven inside his home. Raven finally found a way out through the tiny smokehole, but emerged black from head to toe, as he remains today.



LELAWI THEATER: Taking its name from a Delaware word meaning "in the middle," the circular Lelawi Theater seats 120 and offers a free 13-minute multimedia presentation on contemporary native life. Highlighted are the Mi'kmaq (east), the Maya and Aymara (south), the Inupiat and Haida (north) and the Hopi, Lakota and Muscogee Creek (west).

OUR PEOPLES: Focuses on historic events told from a native point of view. It includes a "Wall of Gold" featuring coins, crosses and other artifacts made of gold.

- History is seen from the vantage point of these eight tribes*:
- Tohono O'odham (Arizona)
 - Seminole (Florida)
 - Eastern Band of Cherokee (North Carolina)
 - Kiowa (Oklahoma)
 - Nahua (Mexico)
 - Tapirape (Brazil)
 - Ka'apor (Brazil)
 - Wixarika, known also as Huichol (Mexico)

*Groups are scheduled to rotate every two years, following the same themes.



Man's feather headdress (Ka'apor, Brazil)

WINDOW ON COLLECTIONS: Allows visitors a glimpse of the diversity of objects from the total collection. More than 3,500 objects are displayed in glass-fronted cases on the third and fourth levels. Visitors can use interactive technology to view video clips of community members and specialists talking about artifacts and to rotate an artifact's electronic image for 360-degree viewing. These displays will be periodically changed. The seven inaugural categories include: animal-themed figurines and objects, beadwork, baskets and jars, dolls, peace medals, projectile points and qeros (cups for ritual drinking).



Ivory polar bear, by Moses Pungowiwi (Yup'ik, Alaska)

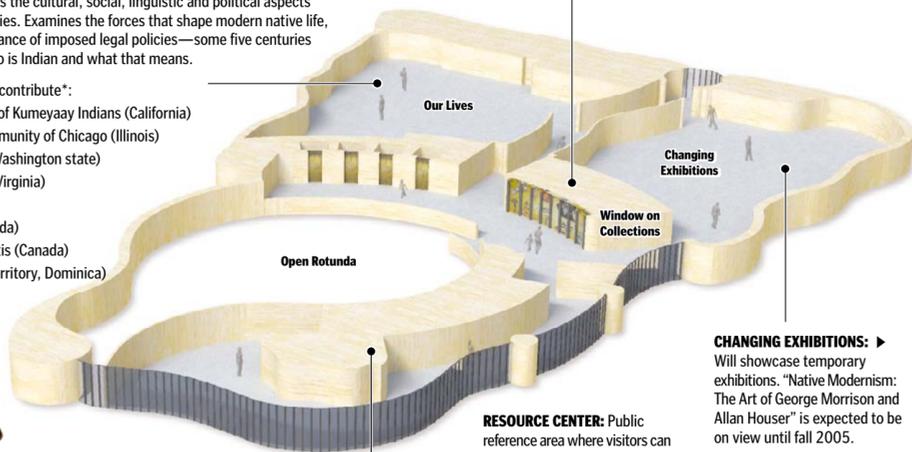
3rd Floor



OUR LIVES: Explores the cultural, social, linguistic and political aspects of native communities. Examines the forces that shape modern native life, including the resonance of imposed legal policies—some five centuries old—regarding who is Indian and what that means.

- Eight communities contribute*:
- The Campo Band of Kumeyaay Indians (California)
 - Urban Indian community of Chicago (Illinois)
 - Yakama Nation (Washington state)
 - Pamunkey Tribe (Virginia)
 - Igloodik (Canada)
 - Kahnawake (Canada)
 - Saint-Laurent Metis (Canada)
 - Kalinago (Carib Territory, Dominica)

Gold headdress ornament (Nasca, Peru)



RESOURCE CENTER: Public reference area where visitors can learn more about native people; open seven days a week.

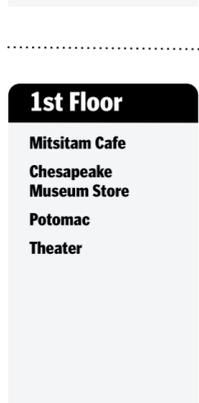
CHANGING EXHIBITIONS: Will showcase temporary exhibitions. "Native Modernism: The Art of George Morrison and Allan Houser" is expected to be on view until fall 2005.

Morrison (1919-2000) and Houser (1914-1994) laid the foundation for contemporary Native American art. Morrison, best known for his paintings, wood collages and sculptures, created works rooted in abstract expressionism and surrealism that drew on memories of the horizon over Lake Superior. Houser, often referred to as the "father of contemporary Native American sculpture" blended native subject matter with modernist design. Both experimented with design, form and color to create modern works that bridged the gap between native and non-native audiences.

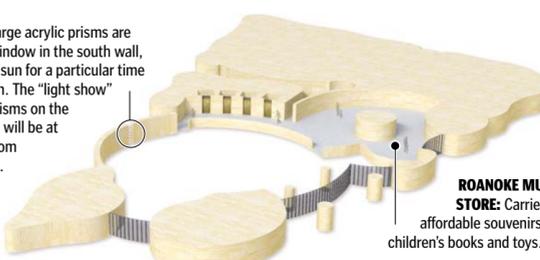


Reverie, by Alan Houser (Chiricahua Apache, New Mexico)

2nd Floor



PRISMS: Eight large acrylic prisms are positioned in a window in the south wall, each sited to the sun for a particular time of day and season. The "light show" created by the prisms on the Potomac rotunda will be at its height daily from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.



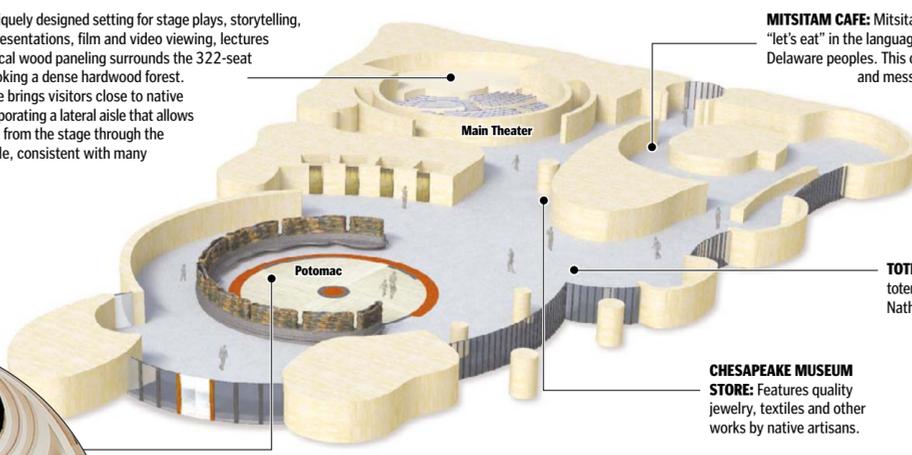
ROANOKE MUSEUM STORE: Carries more affordable souvenirs and children's books and toys.

CHESAPEAKE MUSEUM STORE: Features quality jewelry, textiles and other works by native artisans.

1st Floor



MAIN THEATER: Uniquely designed setting for stage plays, storytelling, dance and music presentations, film and video viewing, lectures and seminars. Vertical wood paneling surrounds the 322-seat circular theater, evoking a dense hardwood forest. This gathering place brings visitors close to native performers by incorporating a lateral aisle that allows performers to move from the stage through the audience in full circle, consistent with many native dances.

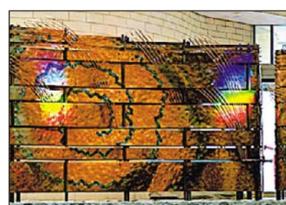


POTOMAC

A central element to the museum's interior, this 120-foot-wide rotunda rises 120 feet to a skylight. The word Potomac comes from the Piscataway word meaning "where the goods are brought in"; this area is intended as a gathering place for live presentations and special events.

Laid in the floor at the center of the Potomac is a disk of red sandstone, its design an abstraction of fire. From this circle, the four cardinal directions extend to views out of the building, and the solstices and equinoxes are mapped on the floor with rings of black and red granite.

A wall of woven copper bands encircles the Potomac. This screen, textured with a solar pattern, evokes native basketry and textiles.



Through 2006, several vessels—from Netsillingmiut-style kayaks to the totora-reed boats of the Aymara people of Bolivia and Peru—will be constructed in the Potomac by master native boat-builders and their apprentices.

REPORTED BY BRENNIA MALONEY, ILLUSTRATED BY LOUIS SPIRITO AND DESIGNED BY FARHANA HOSSAIN —THE WASHINGTON POST
ARTIFACT PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

TOTEM POLE: A 20-foot-tall totem pole carved by Tlingit artist Nathan Jackson.

A fisheye view of the Potomac rotunda