Welcome to wǝɫǝʔaltxʷ

INFORMATION

This item is for information only.

BACKGROUND

Mission: “This space is where our students need never be alone. We brought right order to this open space. It is now a place that holds a longhouse-style facility, wǝɫǝʔaltxʷ. We blessed it, named it, reclaimed the plants, trees, and food gathering regions, designed its parts, and constructed a building. It is a good Intellectual House.”

This is a space for everyone that reflects that the University sits on Tribal lands and there are American Indian/Alaska Native faculty members, staff, and students on campus.

wǝɫǝʔaltxʷ is a Lushootseed word gifted to the planning group by Vi Hilbert (Upper Skagit) that literally translates to “smart house”. Lushootseed is the original language of the Eastern Puget Sound and Vi is largely credited for revitalizing the language. Pronunciation: (wuh-shuh-balt)

wǝɫǝʔaltxʷ - Intellectual House opened on March 12, 2015.

Attachments

1. Presenter’s Biographical Information – Casey Wynecoop
2. UW and Regional Tribes Celebrate Longhouse Groundbreaking
**Presenter’s Biographical Information**

**Casey Wynecoop** is the Administrative Coordinator at wałabʔaltxʷ and currently its Acting Director. He is an enrolled member of the Spokane Tribe and was raised in Wellpinit on the Spokane Indian Reservation in Eastern Washington. The past 11 years he has worked within the Seattle Urban Indian communities, as well as the LGBTQ communities, to create spaces that are inclusive and honor all of our identities. He began his work here at the UW as student programmer for the Q Center in 2006, and returned to the UW in his current position January 2015.

Casey currently serves as the UW Native American Faculty and Staff Affinity Group Leader. He also serves on the board for Red Eagle Soaring, a local non-profit Native Youth Theater organization, and is a local karaoke host.
A dream 40 years in the making took one step closer to becoming reality when the University of Washington joined regional tribal members to celebrate the groundbreaking for a Native American longhouse-style facility, on the UW campus, Oct. 25. Wǝɫǝʔaltxʷ, pronounced “wah-sheb-altuh” and the Lushootseed language name for “Intellectual House,” will serve as a learning and gathering place for Native American students, faculty and staff, as well as the UW and surrounding community. It will also serve as a symbol that honors the region’s tribes, including the Duwamish whose land the campus now occupies. “It will be an extraordinarily important building for this university, and I don’t use that lightly,” UW President Michael K. Young said.

Several hundred people, including leaders and elders representing over 50 tribes, gathered to witness the ceremony that took place at the facility’s site located in the N6 parking lot between Lewis and McMahon Halls. The program featured remarks from UW and tribal leaders, an invocation from UW Native American Advisory Board chair Patricia Whitefoot and songs performed by the group Southern Plains.

Participating in the “turning of the ground” were Young, Provost Ana Mari Cauce, UW Vice President for Minority Affairs and Vice Provost for Diversity Sheila Edwards Lange, Whitefoot, UW Tribal Liaison Ross Braine, Wǝɫǝʔaltxʷ Advisory Committee Co-Chairs W. Ron Allen and Charlotte Coté, and students Noelani Aure and Jared Remington. “When I became vice president, they told me that on this campus we build buildings to 100-year standards,” Lange said. “We just can’t put up any building, it has to be able to last for at least 100 years. This building will stand for 100 years and more, just like the spirit of the first people whose land we stand on.” Wǝɫǝʔaltxʷ will feature a “village concept” that includes two primary buildings and a central outdoor gathering space. October’s ceremony was the groundbreaking for the project’s first phase: the 8,400-square foot Community Gathering Building and the outdoor space expected to open in 2015. Donations and pledges totaling almost $6 million are supporting the design and construction of phase one.
Phase two of the project will include further fundraising for the second building, a Teaching and Learning space. The UW is currently accepting donations for this second phase. The design for Wǝʔałbʔaltxʷ was created by the Seattle architectural firm of Jones & Jones. It will showcase the Pacific Northwest coastal-longhouse style and include elements that speak to Native people from all regions of the country.

In addition to being a symbol that honors the region’s tribes, Wǝʔałbʔaltxʷ will be a home-away-from-home for Native American UW students.

“This project is about our students, this is about our future leaders,” said Allen, chairman and chief executive officer of the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe. “The university is a city within a city, it’s very competitive, and we want students to have a place where they can feel comfortable, where they feel their culture, who they are and what they are about, and share stories and share experiences wherever they come from in Indian country.”

The planning process to build Wǝʔałbʔaltxʷ received input and guidance from UW community members, an elders committee and regional tribes. A site blessing was performed on April 10, 2009, and the Wǝʔałbʔaltxʷ name was gifted to the project by the late Vi Hilbert, a Lushootseed linguist and elder in the Upper Skagit Tribe.

“I have so much pride in my heart for this building and for this space, and for all of you to be here and share this with us, because we are going to be living this dream,” said Coté, UW associate professor of American Indian Studies.