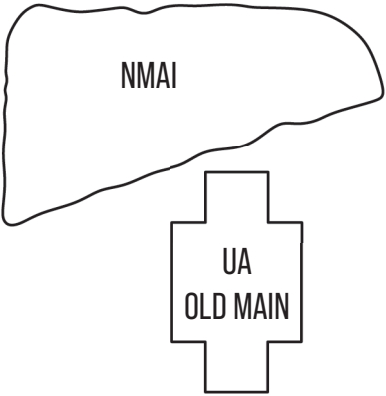


NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN (NMAI)



Location: Washington D.C.
Architect: Douglas Cardinal, Jones & Jones, Smith Group
Completed: 2004
Size: 250,000 square feet
Client: Smithsonian Institution
Function: Museum



For More Information:
<http://americanindian.si.edu/>
<https://www.si.edu/unit/american-indian-museum>

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN (NMAI)

Project Goals

- Promote equity and social justice for Indigenous Peoples through education, inspiration, and empowerment
- Foster a richer shared human experience
- Share culture, perspectives, history, and achievements of Indigenous Peoples
- Deconstruct and reconstruct cultural narratives
- Champion diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion
- Convene strategic partnerships and collaboration



George Gustav Heye collected Native American artifacts while working in Arizona.



President George H. W. Bush signed legislation creating the NMAI as part of the Smithsonian.



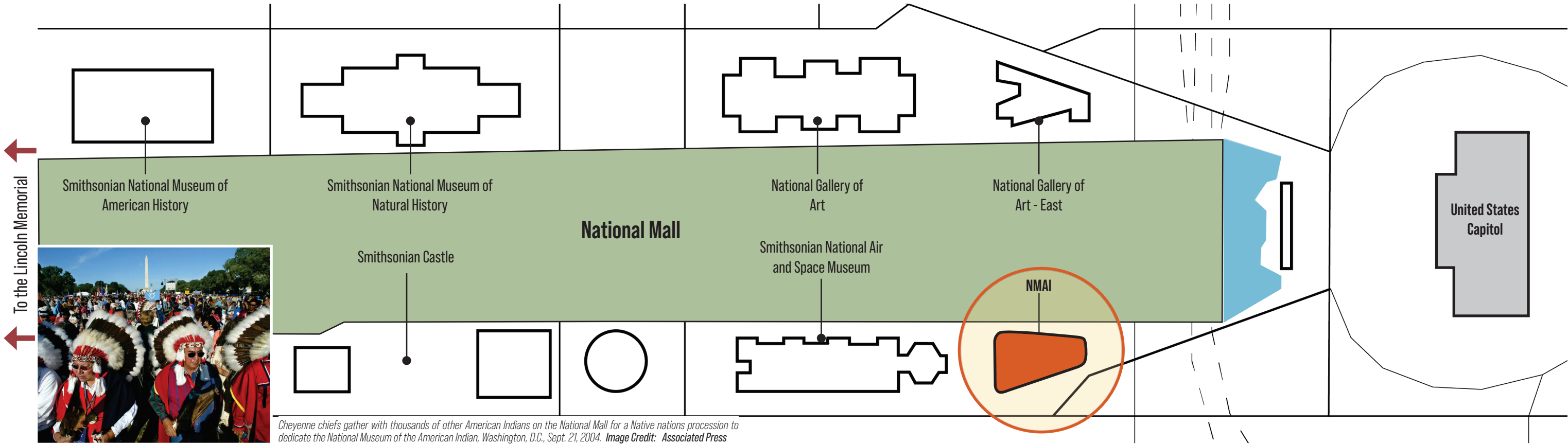
Museum Staff consulted with tribal communities to develop the program and design.



NMAI opened on the National Mall with the largest known gathering of Indigenous communities in history.

Location + Context

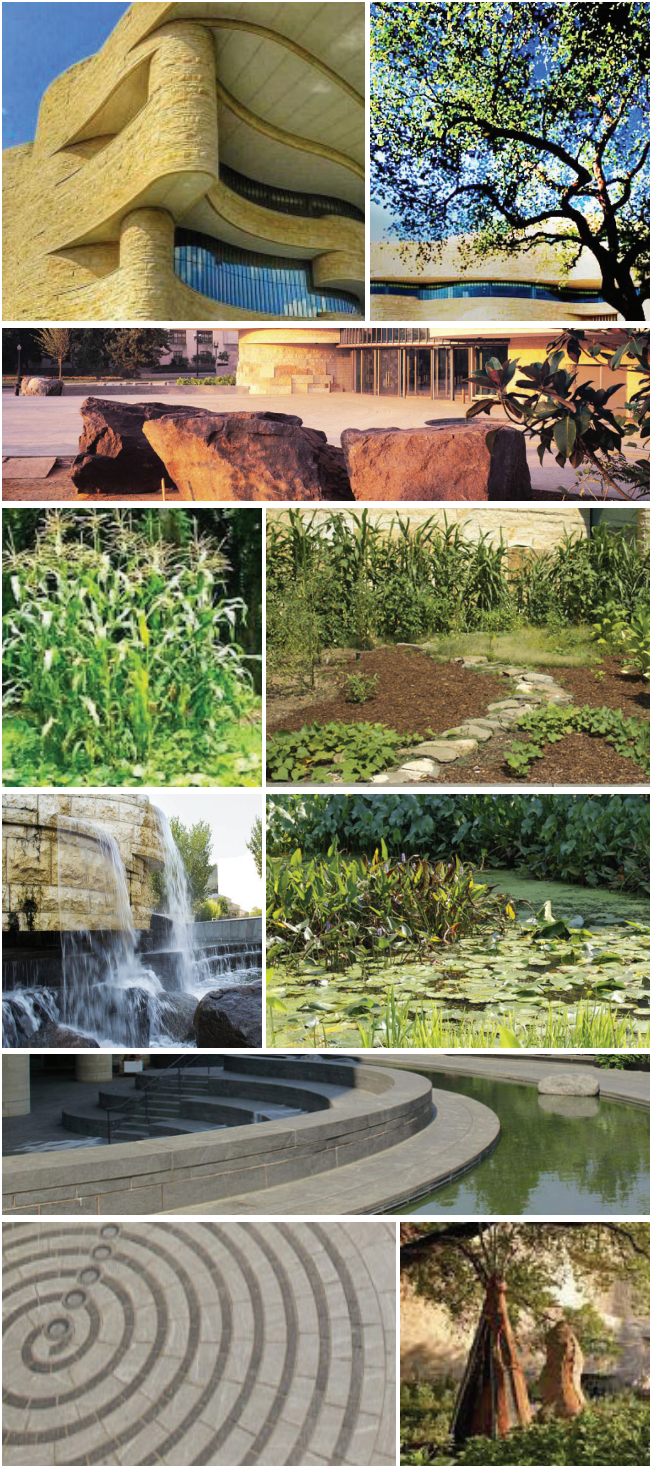
The National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) is located directly east of the National Air and Space Museum and across from the National Gallery of Art. The design of the museum on the National Mall required an analysis of site and context as well as the understanding of the land and the people occupying the land. The mall defines a strong axial alignment between the United States Capitol and the Lincoln Memorial. Buildings along the mall respond orthogonally to this grid, and set up a formal relationship between the architecture of the mall and the Capitol building. The NMAI building by contrast responds organically, in architecture and in landscape, illustrating an alternative perspective on land and form. The mall is used primarily as a pedestrian path between the museums and major monuments, however it is also used as a place for activities, often drawing national attention on the large, grass area. The processional along the mall is formal and dramatic, a place of importance and recognition. Locating NMAI directly on the mall nationally acknowledges the importance of Indigenous Peoples of America.



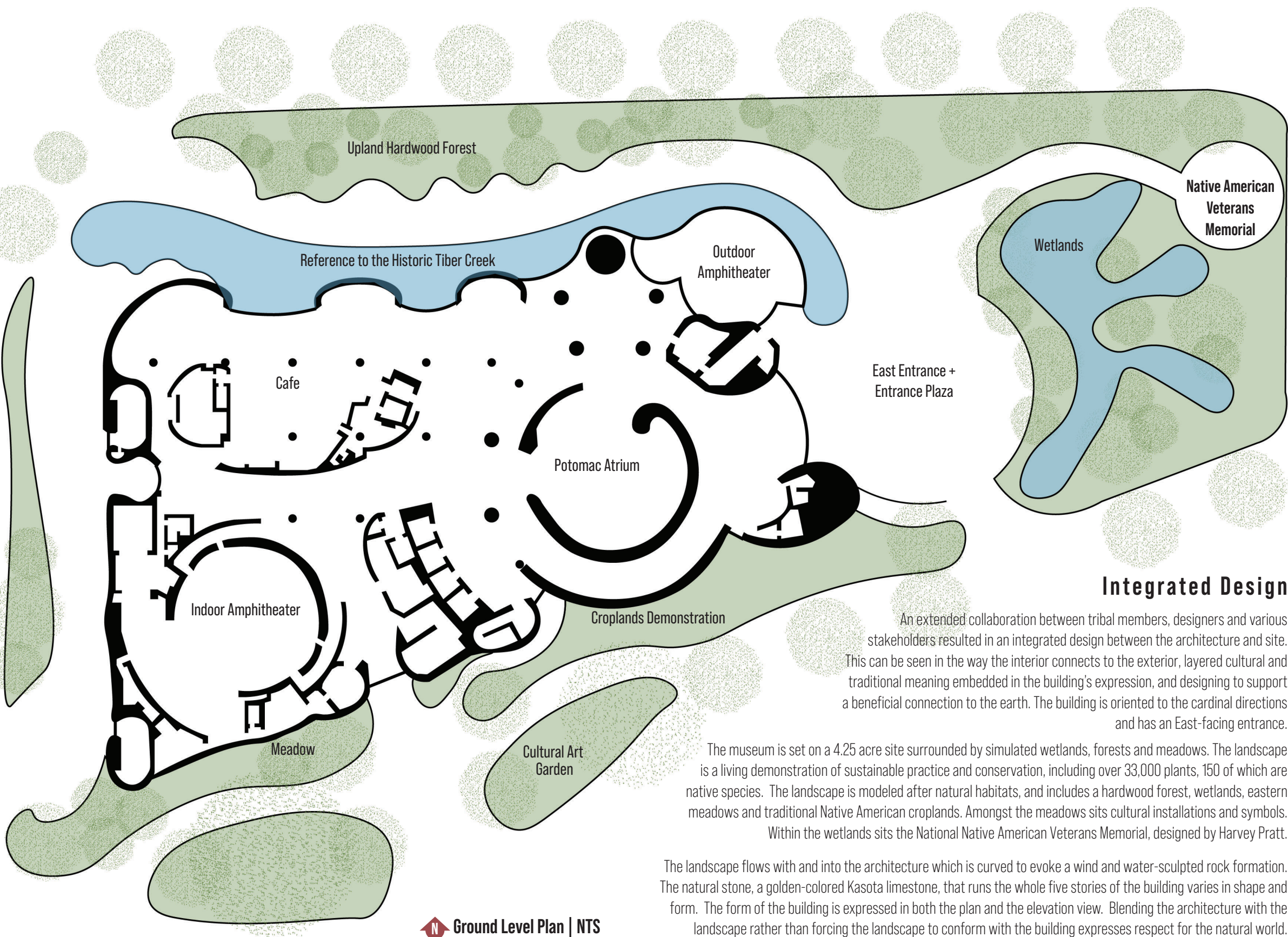
Cheyenne chiefs gather with thousands of other American Indians on the National Mall for a Native nations procession to dedicate the National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C., Sept. 21, 2004. Image Credit: Associated Press

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN (NMAI)

Landscape and Symbolism



Images above showing the curved surface of limestone on the building exterior; a majestic hardwood tree shading the entrance path; Grandfather Stones at the entrance; a stand of corn and the demonstration native crop garden; a water feature representing the historic Tiber Creek that once flowed in this area; the wetlands habitat; an outdoor amphitheater abutting the water feature; cultural symbols and imagery in the paving patterns and situated in the landscape.



Integrated Design

An extended collaboration between tribal members, designers and various stakeholders resulted in an integrated design between the architecture and site. This can be seen in the way the interior connects to the exterior, layered cultural and traditional meaning embedded in the building's expression, and designing to support a beneficial connection to the earth. The building is oriented to the cardinal directions and has an East-facing entrance.

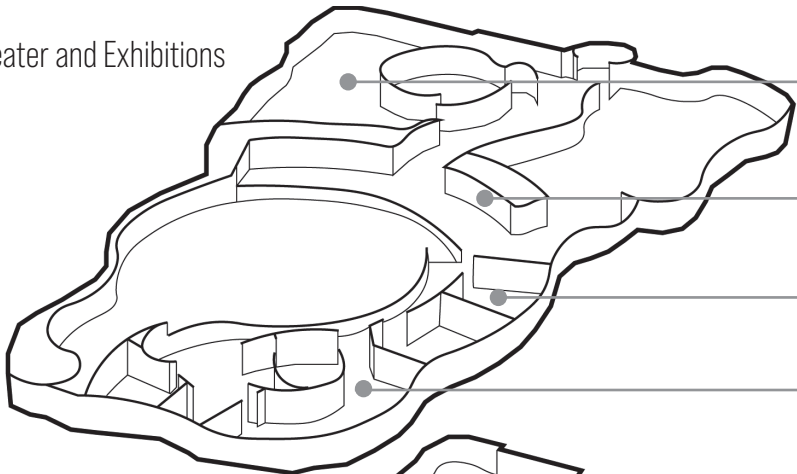
The museum is set on a 4.25 acre site surrounded by simulated wetlands, forests and meadows. The landscape is a living demonstration of sustainable practice and conservation, including over 33,000 plants, 150 of which are native species. The landscape is modeled after natural habitats, and includes a hardwood forest, wetlands, eastern meadows and traditional Native American croplands. Amongst the meadows sits cultural installations and symbols. Within the wetlands sits the National Native American Veterans Memorial, designed by Harvey Pratt.

The landscape flows with and into the architecture which is curved to evoke a wind and water-sculpted rock formation. The natural stone, a golden-colored Kasota limestone, that runs the whole five stories of the building varies in shape and form. The form of the building is expressed in both the plan and the elevation view. Blending the architecture with the landscape rather than forcing the landscape to conform with the building expresses respect for the natural world.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN (NMAI)

Plan Organization + Programming

Floor 4: Theater and Exhibitions



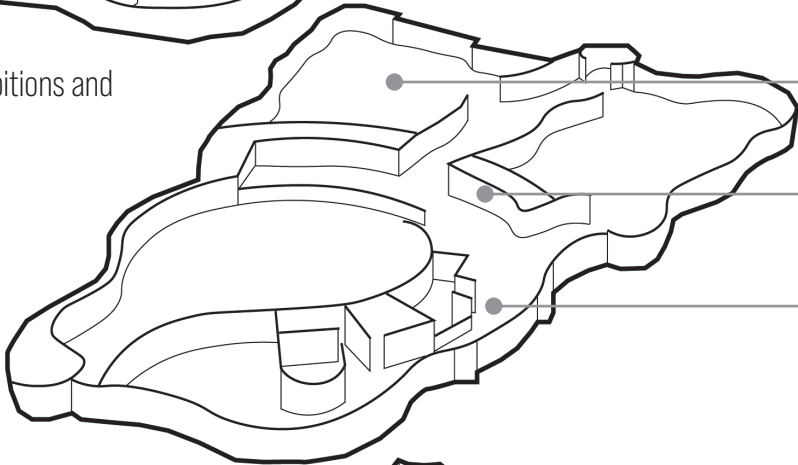
South Gallery

Collections Exhibition

Conference Center

Patrons Lounge

Floor 3: Special Exhibitions and Family Activities

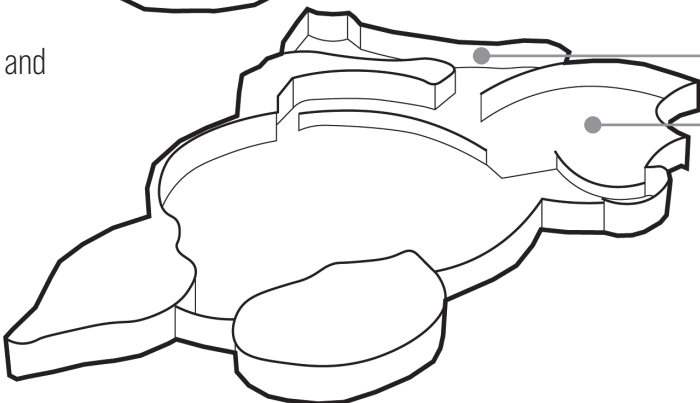


Americans Exhibition

Collections Exhibition

Activity Center

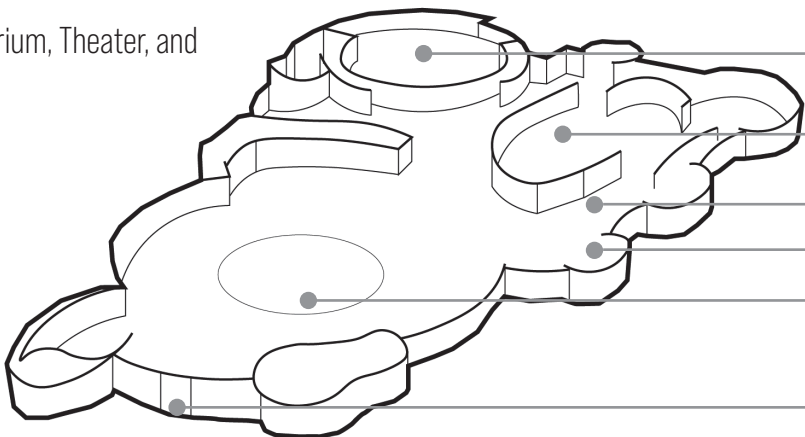
Floor 2: Changing Exhibitions and Museum Store



Gallery

Museum Store

Floor 1: Atrium, Theater, and Cafe



Theater

Native Foods Cafe

Visitor Information

Flag Atrium

Atrium

Main Entrance



"Americans", a collection of Indian-themed objects. Photo credit New York Times



Image under the entry dome placed prominently for gathering and ceremonial activity. Photo credit Smith Group

