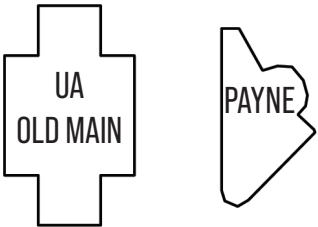


# UM PAYNE FAMILY NATIVE AMERICAN CENTER



**Location:** Missoula, Montana  
**Architect:** Daniel J. Glenn - 7 Directions  
**Completed:** 2010  
**Size:** 30,000 square feet  
**Client:** University of Montana  
**Function:** Indigenous Student Support + Success



**For More Information:**  
<https://www.umt.edu/ces/venues/payne.php>  
<https://www.7directionsarchitects.com/project/payne-family-native-american-center/>

*Photo Credit: Jackson Contractor Group*



# UM PAYNE FAMILY NATIVE AMERICAN CENTER

## Project Goals

- Honor and celebrate the heritage of the land
- Represent the 12 federally recognized tribal nations
- Aimed at sustainability (LEED Platinum)
- Help Native students ease into college life
- Be a bridge between Native and mainstream culture
- Symbol of goodwill, unity, and intersection



Center was funded by private donors and the state of Montana to embody UM's strong commitment to the Indigenous Peoples of the state and nation.



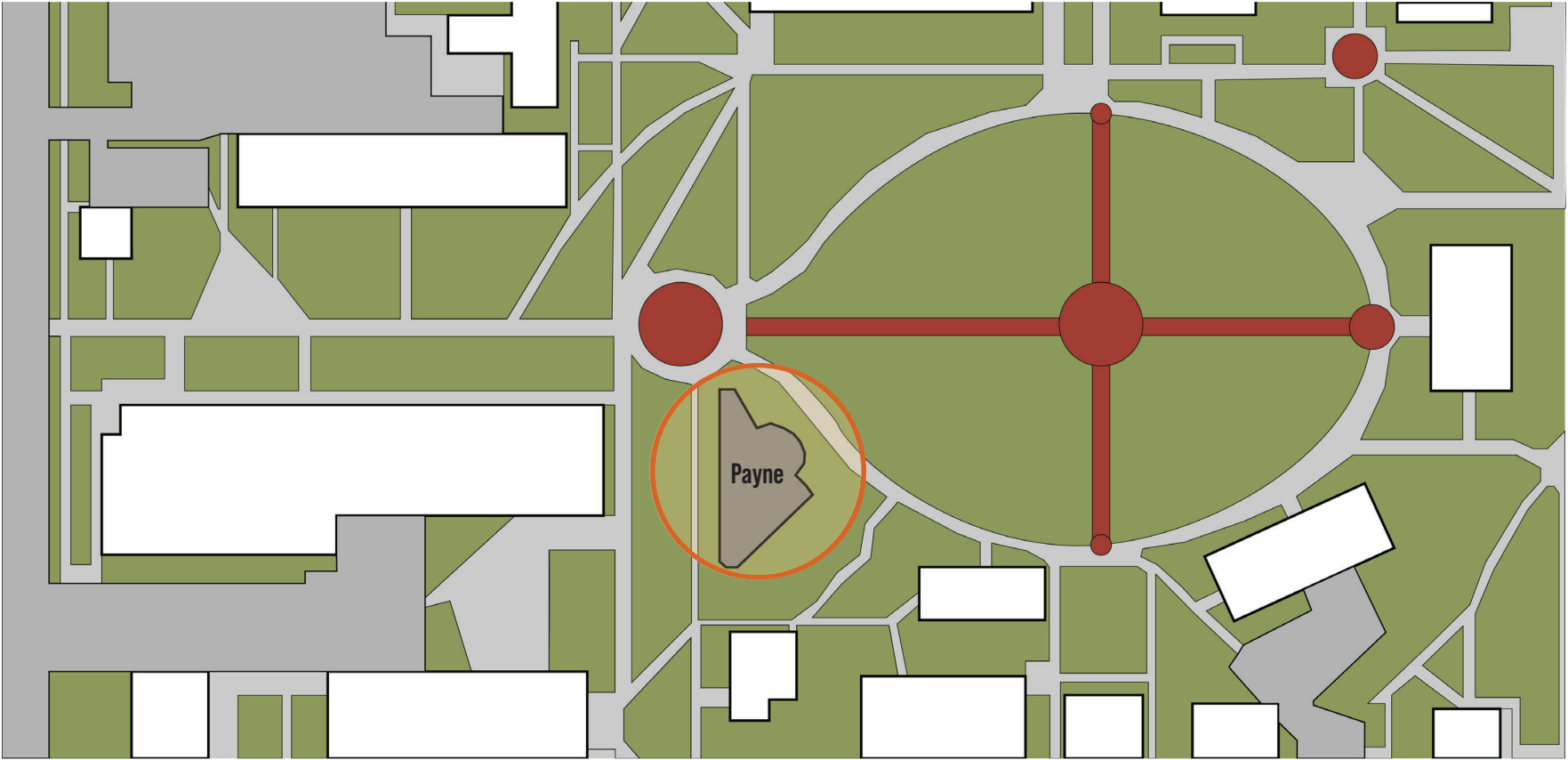
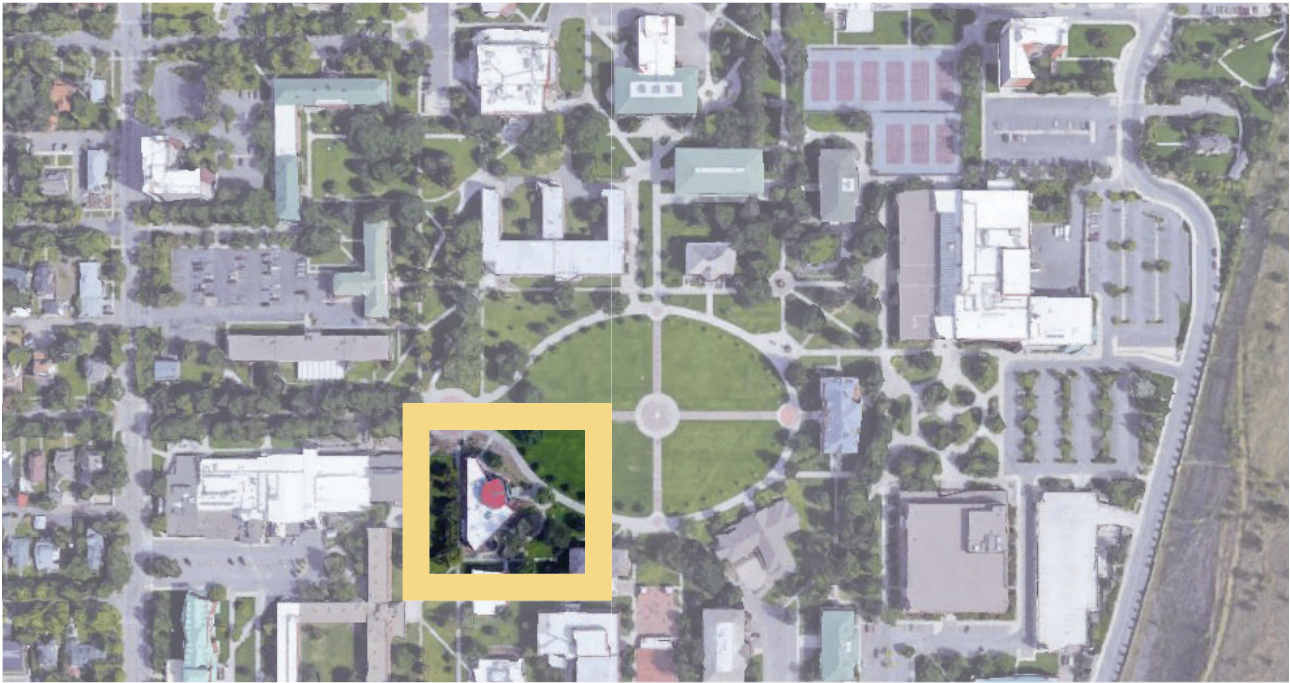
Designed by Daniel Glenn, a member of the Crow Tribe, and is the first facility built exclusively for a department of Native American Studies and American Indian Student Services in the United States.



Building is LEED Platinum certified and also incorporates Native ideals of sustainability.

## Representation

The building was given the last, prime piece of land on the campus oval, underscoring its importance and the strong support of the UM administration. Fittingly, it is the site of a historic Salish Indian encampment, and the building is designed to reflect that legacy as well as the heritage and cultures of all Montana tribes. The building's structure is based around a 12-sided rotunda style design, with each side representing one of the 12 tribes in Montana.



## Location + Context

The University of Montana sits on Salish, Kootenai, and Qlipse land, and tries to honor the heritage of the land with the Payne Family Native American Center. The Payne Family Native American Center was the most recent design to be constructed at the University of Montana's oval. This was the last usable space to build on. The logs that hold the building were salvaged from the nearby Clark Fork river, and the landscaping around the building mimics the natural ecosystem originally existing here. The orientation of the Payne Family Native American Center is East-facing and faces towards the university's center Oval of campus.



## Honoring the True History

The Missoula Historic Preservation Commission required that the proposed Payne Family Native American Center fit into the surrounding historical structures. Architect Daniel Glenn walked through campus with a group of Tribal Elders to solicit their opinions on its Western European architecture. He explained to them that the center would need to echo this style. The Elders explicitly reacted against that idea, as the historical architecture on campus reminded them of the Indian schools to which they were sent as children. To them, the red brick and columns of the schools' buildings inspired fear, not charm.

The Elders expressed that they wanted a design that was "boldly Native American", and Glenn found his answer one day while looking through old photographs. He came across a photo of a Salish family standing outside their tipi at the foot of Mount Sentinel in the late 1800s. They were standing on the very ground of today's campus. The tipis in the picture were the original architecture of the Missoula valley, predating the UM campus. When Glenn presented the photo to the Missoula Historic Preservation Commission, he received the go-ahead to start drawing.

Photo Credit: 7 Directions



# UM PAYNE FAMILY NATIVE AMERICAN CENTER



**Cultural Connection:** Tribal flags lead to the iconic entrance. Carved into exterior walls are seals of 7 reservations and quotes from former University President and Native Elders.



**Structure:** Based around a 12-sided rotunda with each side representing one of the 12 tribes in Montana. The roof features a long skylight to resemble the slit of a teepee's smoke hole.



**Design:** Parfleche patterns that represent the 12 tribes are etched and stained onto the floor. The poles supporting the mezzanine level were salvaged from the bottom of the Blackfoot River when the Milltown Dam was removed.

## Program

Payne Family NA Center is 30,000 sf with 4 classrooms, 1 conference room, 12 offices, 1 student lounge, and multiple meeting rooms. It houses the American Indian Student Services office and the Native American Studies program. Together, these programs support resources such as financial aid, mentoring, advocacy, and tutoring, as well as education in Native studies. The building also houses the Elouise Cobell star gazing room and planetarium. A collaborative effort among Astronomy and Native American Studies faculty to create curriculum and presentations around star lore of Native American cultures



## Ethnobotany Gardens

The Ethnobotany Garden plays a significant role in making the Payne Center recognizable as a Native American place. The garden also provides an opportunity for public education and a living laboratory for students. In addition to the architecture, the landscape also reflects the legacy, heritage and cultures of all Native American tribes in Montana.

The Ethnobotany Garden at the Payne Family Native American Center contains native plants, shrubs, and grasses of the Rocky Mountain West. Eight stone “circles of life” represent diverse ecoregions of Montana and the Native American Tribes that live within them.



Photo Credit: 7 Directions