

Citizens' Institute on Rural Design

Contact: Brendan F. White
Email: brendan.white@srmt-nsn.gov
Tel: (518) 358-2272 ext. 2286

Date: Tuesday, April 5, 2016

AKWESASNE CULTURAL CENTER RECEIVES CITIZENS' INSTITUTE ON RURAL DESIGN™ AWARD *Akwesasne selected as one of 6 communities nationwide to host a rural design workshop*

Akwesasne Territory - The Citizens' Institute on Rural Design™ (CIRD) announced this week that the Akwesasne Cultural Center, in partnership with the Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Working Group, and The American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA), was selected to host a rural design technical workshop for the 2016-2017 program year.

The workshop will bring together local community leaders, non-profit organizations, community groups, businesses and individual community members with a team of rural planning and creative lacemaking professionals to develop beautification projects to enhance the community of Akwesasne. Through collaborative efforts, workshop participants will craft unique solutions that address the community's design challenges and opportunities.

The Akwesasne Cultural Center will receive a \$10,000 stipend to host the workshop and to conduct follow-up planning sessions. The award also includes in-kind design expertise and technical assistance valued at \$35,000 to benefit the entire community; along with additional support through webinars, conference calls, and web-based resources on www.rural-design.org.

“The Citizens' Institute on Rural Design™ represents important tenets of the National Endowment for the Art's work,” said NEA Chairman Jane Chu. “By providing resources to assist rural communities in crafting design and arts-based solutions to their development challenges, the NEA and its partners will help make a difference in the quality of life for these rural places.”

The proposal submitted by the Akwesasne Cultural Center was one of six selected by an advisory panel from a pool of 53 applicants this year. It was developed in coordination with the Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Working Group, which is a community group established in response to the *Sharing the Spirit: An Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Strategy* that was developed in October 2009 from community planning sessions.

“We were extremely impressed by the number of high quality applications we received. The selected communities demonstrate rich potential for leveraging partnerships to take action on a wide range of rural design issues,” said Cynthia Nikitin, CIRD Program Director and Senior Vice President of Project for Public Spaces, Inc.



Citizens' Institute on Rural Design

Each of the projects selected for CIR D workshops has the potential to lay the foundation for positive transformation. Collectively, they demonstrate how planning for the future by focusing on assets and opportunities strengthens the social, cultural, and economic vibrancy of communities,” said David Leckey, Executive Director of the Orton Family Foundation.

The workshop will focus on the development of a cultural tourism plan to identify key elements of Mohawk culture and a strategy for incorporating them into the design of buildings, signage, and landscaping on State Route 37, the reservation’s main transportation route.

“The CIR D award is great support for our community's overall tourism initiative. It will be community members that will help incorporate Mohawk culture into every aspect of community design--now and into the future,” said Lindsay M. Tarbell, SRMT Office of Economic Development Planner and member of the Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Working Group. “I am looking forward to working closely with the professional designers to develop a solid community plan to make Akwesasne even more beautiful for the enjoyment of community members, as well as for tourists.”

“We are excited to be an active partner in designing strategies to enhance the sense of place and community in Akwesasne”, said Camille Ferguson, American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA) Executive Director. “We support this project’s goals of preserving natural and historic landscapes, protecting working agricultural lands and celebrating Native artistic and cultural traditions.”

“We would like visitors and community members to feel a visual and real connection to Mohawk culture when traveling through this main highway,” stated Sue Ellen Herne, program coordinator at the Akwesasne Cultural Center. “Creating a Community Plan for Route 37 will accentuate our community’s many cultural assets, support growth for numerous existing businesses, and assist in fulfilling goals of the Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Strategic Plan.”

For a complete list of selected communities and past workshop locations, please visit the Citizens' Institute on Rural Design™ website at www.rural-design.org/where-we-work

###

The Citizens' Institute on Rural Design™ (CIR D) is a program of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with U.S. Department of Agriculture, Project for Public Spaces, and the Orton Family Foundation. Established in 1991, CIR D has convened more than 70 rural design workshops in all regions of the country, empowering residents to leverage local assets in order to build better places to live, work, and play. **For more information visit www.rural-design.org.**



Citizens' Institute on Rural Design

The Akwesasne Cultural Center is a living, growing center of knowledge, preservation, education and collaboration that serves and is shaped and sustained by the entire community. The Akwesasne Cultural Tourism Working Group represents a wide spectrum of the community including governing bodies, businesses, non-profits, and artists.

