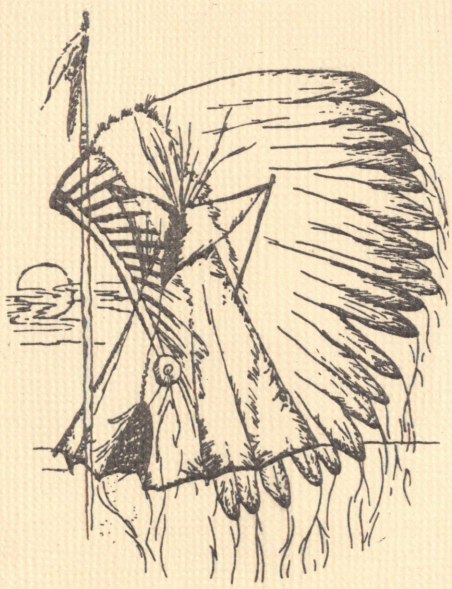
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A NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER



BY
TERRY
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A NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER

by

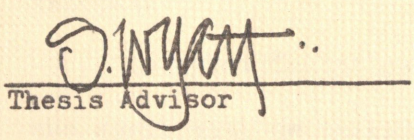
TERRY PAUL WETZSTEON

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

BACHELOR OF ARCHITECTURE

Approved:



Thesis Advisor

Director, School of Architecture

Graduate Dean

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
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THESIS STATEMENT

V

ANY SOCIETY NECESSARILY HAS A PARTICULAR 'STRUCTURE' WHICH SHOULD FIND A CORRESPONDING PHYSICAL FRAME. IN OTHER WORDS, IT IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE TO DEFINE SOCIALLY AND CULTURALLY DETERMINED BUILDING TASKS WHICH SHOULD BE TRANSLATED INTO ARCHITECTURAL SOLUTIONS.

ABSTRACT

The analysis of design problems is by no means obviously possible. Every design problem begins with an effort to achieve fitness between two entities: the form in question and its context. The context defines the problem: the form is the solution to the problem.

Architectural form is molded by intention - a compound of forces including the social/cultural context (the basis of my thesis statement) and the designer's grasp of the multi-dimensional nature of the spaces handled by the architect.(thus my study and application of the theory of existential space).

A man is related to all of existence as it, in turn, is related to him. The Indian was an ecologist by cultural conviction (the Center was designed with basic natural materials so as to be consistent with the Indian's respect for nature) and his whole life gave testimony to the principle that every single thing on the earth is a part of the whole and that whole is a harmony in the universe.

The sense, then, that a great and uniting spirit pervades everything in nature, and that this unity has a certain nobility in its wholeness, is a hallmark of Indian consciousness. It is a conception that informs us that there is more to things than we can perceive by merely regarding their outward forms and appearance. Indeed, the whole is very much something more than what it appears to be merely to our gross senses. There reposes in existence an essence which can be discerned by those who have the will to understand, in the fullest sense of the word.

It has been my goal to incorporate a measure of this essence into my design solution, and I believe that it is indeed there for those who will see it.

THE PROJECT

Scientists have disproved the belief, once widely held, that race determines the traits and characteristics of the members of any group. Most of the differences between groups or societies reflect differences in cultural contacts and environments. Traits, beliefs, and patterns of behavior are not inherited, but are learned from the culture in which one is reared. Before Europeans came to North America, the native inhabitants had developed distinct cultural patterns based largely on the environments of the regions in which they lived. Since the early 1700's the culture of the plains Indian - the group with which most, but not all, of the Montana tribes were affiliated - was largely determined by the buffalo. The Indian culture was so different from that of the European nations that the newcomers regarded the natives as savages. Yet the Indian was well adapted to his environment, and the early settlers necessarily accepted into their own culture much of the Indian knowledge. But there were and are many differences in cultural values between the Indian and the Europeans. So great were these differences in values that some social barriers persist today.[1]

Oscar B. Johnson once said: "The Anglo-Saxon smashes the culture of any primitive people that gets in their way, and then, with loving care, places the pieces in a museum."[2] While such a statement is true of North

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[1] "The Montana-Wyoming Indian," U.S. Department of the Interior, February, 1965, pp. 3-4.

[2] Oscar B. Johnson in The Life and Art of the North American Indian, Crescent Books, New York, 1975, p. 90.

American Indians in general, it bears particular relevance to the plight of the tribes on the Great Plains. Perhaps nowhere else in North America was the aboriginal culture so decimated.by the white man.

But during the last twenty years a major shift has been inaugurated at the very base of White commercial culture. Twenty years ago, the active individual in society was evaluated in terms of production. He was referred to as a producer. Today, the shift has proceeded far enough so that the same individual (though he may still be a producer) is evaluated in terms of consumption. He is referred to, with ever increasing frequency, as a consumer. For this to have happened in the short space of twenty years is hard to believe, yet it is nothing compared to what the next twenty years can be expected to bring. Intrepreted realistically, this shift in value and emphasis can only mean that there has been a decrease in the need for the productivity of human labor, and that there has been an increase in means, other than earning, whereby non-producers may still function as consumers.

It is the expressed opinion of a number of reliable economists and sociologists that in the next twenty years Western society will be forced to find a definition of meaning and purpose other than the traditional one of education-for-earning, job-building, earning-a-living and accumulating possessions. These people warn that this shift is already much further underway than is popularly realized, and that it will continue until automatic machines and computer complexes have removed many of today's job opportunities and much of the necessity for human beings to continue

producing what cybernated machines can produce better, faster, and cheaper. In the face of these developments many of the features of traditional Indian culture are going to appear saner and more attractive.

There is a tremendous surgence among American Indians today that is a revivalist movement combining the best of the old and the best of the new, in which youth and adult will find a common cause. The words of the Indian are a potential source of cultural health for us all. They are a way into another and necessary view of our world, and we need to take them more seriously, not merely as folklore. In an age where many are tired of the materialism and ecologically destructive facets of modern society, the cultures of the North American Indian seem to offer a refreshing alternative to these modes of life.

Vincent Price says, "Most of us will admit, with varying degrees of intensity ranging from the desultory to passionate indignation, that our Indian brother has had a bad deal from us and a rough go of it to survive. We admit that what has been done for him must be classified in the disastrous category of 'too little and too late.' But suddenly we find that this very survival-spirit is a phenomenon which is demanding respectful public awareness of the Indian as an indomitable, dignified, creative human being. And as our respect for him grows so does the Indian's appreciation of himself."[3]

For centuries Europeans and Americans have been writing histories of

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[3]Vincent Price in Native American Arts, Washington D.C., 1968, p. 3.

American Indians. They have studied them, invaded their privacy, and cast theoretical concepts about their image, their past, their failures and their psyche. Sadly, the average American boasts an almost voluntary ignorance of factual Indian history and/or contemporary life. There is no History waiting for us like some giant and architecturally perfect ediface that we will at long last discover in the tangled growth of some intellectual forrest. The past must be brought alive or revealed for what it always has been - a part of the present.

Sadder yet has been the insensitive disregard for the cultural as well as the physical needs of a great people. Price says, "In our desperate need for cultural identification in the world and to it, we must look back to the Indian heritage. Unquestionably its cultural influences are indelibly stamped on ours, and at long last we have to admit them and accept them gracefully."[4]

It is important that Americans recognize and give credit to the Indian contribution. It manifests itself in many ways and yet it goes largely unrecognized and unacknowledged. Without recognition by others it is hard to be proud. All of us seek a basis for pride in our own lives, in those of our families and of our ancestors. We manifest our pride in many ways, but always it supports and sustains us. The legitimate pride of the Indian people has been crushed too many times by too many of their fellow Americans. We have sought to 'Americanize' the most American

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[4]Price, op. cit., p. 4.

among us. The principle of equality and all that goes with it demands that all of us recognize each other's cultural heritage as a source of personal strength. For many years Americans believed the Indian people had but two choices; they could live in a reserve community, or they could be assimilated and lose their Indian identity. Of course the Indian does not wish to reject that which he is. The Indian sees himself as a member of a living culture. To be a member of a living culture is to believe that it is preferable to be what one is rather than to be something one is not. To be Indian is to be proud of that culture and heritage.

What is needed is a third alternative - a full role in the society and in the economy while retaining, strengthening and developing an Indian identity which preserves the good things of the past and helps the Indian look to the future.

The challenge then is to foster adequate communication among all people of Indian descent and between them and the American community as a whole. It is with this in mind that I point out the importance of building a Native American Cultural Center in Billings, Montana. The center would provide the physical environment needed for the Indian to discover and assert his ethnic identity, with a strong emotional commitment to his name and self-image, and, in turn, to symbolize that identity. Architecture is an expression of cultural belief and as such can serve as the medium for the preservation, perpetuation and promotion of an Indian cultural identity. The architectural frame must become a rich expression for the Indian way of life and the fact that what takes

place within that frame is of importance to all peoples of the community and the state.

The Native American Cultural Center would function then as a vehicle of self-realization for the Indian people of Billings and the state of Montana. When this happens the Center will become a channel of communication bridging the barriers of cultural differences between the Indian and the dominant society. This in turn will bring forward values that will benefit all people, Indian and non-Indian alike.

PROGRESS REPORT

In view of the fact that the thesis project is considered to be the culmination of a student's curricular experience I consider it most appropriate to review that experience at this time and to consider this review to be an important part of my project.

I've always felt that the purpose or goal of my undergraduate work has been to help me formulate my own philosophy or theory of design. By this I don't mean to say that, upon graduation, I will have a set of fixed ideas that I will expect to remain impervious to change as my career advances. On the contrary, I suspect that I have only begun to learn, and any theory that I may subscribe to or form personally shall not be a creed or recipe but instead shall be a policy to guide my actions or act as an indicator of possibilities.

In many respects the educational process tends to hamper development of theory. To begin with, the architectural curriculum is necessarily fragmented in that it deals with so many separate functions - history, structures, mechanics, design, etc. Granted, all of these things are musts if the student's wish to become an architect is to be realized. What is hard for the student is to grasp the creation of architectural totalities by learning of their ingredients independently and trying to combine them afterwards. Another thing is that most of our studio design problems begin with fairly complete programs thus limiting experience in task-analysis which is the basis for understanding that building means the solution of social and cultural problems.

The thesis project is the first project we face that comprises all

the aspects which characterize a typical architectural totality: building task, form, technique, and semantical relations between these factors. The project demands knowledge of the general principles determining the activities of experiencing, producing, and analyzing architecture, and a full comprehension of the organization of the field of architecture and its types of tasks and means. All of these things imply the need for architectural theory, both because of the fact that architecture is a synthetical activity, and because the individual building task forms a part of a hierarchy of tasks.

I firmly oppose the superstition among architectural designers that theory kills the intuitions and creativity of their work. In understanding architecture as a human product we must answer the following questions: What is the relationship between buildings and those who use them, that is, the prerequisites and effects of architecture. Next we must look at the organization of the means, seen independently of their effects. Finally we must look at whether particular means correspond to particular prerequisites and effects. It is theoretical knowledge that must be incorporated into a method by which this may happen. The responsibility of the architect as the one who more than anyone else gives form to the environment, can only be based on such a clarification of the purpose and means of architecture.

It is with these things in mind that I choose to base the thrust of my design work on the theory of 'existential space' as it has been developed by Christian Norberg-Schulz.

I feel that the thesis project is more than 'just another design problem.' As no project before it has, the thesis project offers the opportunity to reflect on the many exposures I have had in school and from them to pull together a concept or theory that represents my attitudes towards architectural design. The project then may serve as the tool for testing that concept and my ability to implement it in an architectural solution.

Although the theory of existential space is defined and and outlined by Norberg-Schulz, it parallels very closely my personal ideas of architectural thought as they have developed during my education. Rather than try to develop a completely self-defined concept to follow, I will work with those definitions and processes of existential space as provided by Norberg-Schulz. By acknowledging his expertise and the extent to which he has already developed the theory, I feel there is more to be learned by attempting its application as he presents it than there would be from trying to define it in my own ways at this time. For the sake of this project, I think that it is enough that I agree in principle to the ideals contained in the theory as he gives them. If, after completing the project, I feel a need to modify any part of the theory to bring it in line with my experiences then I can do so at that time.

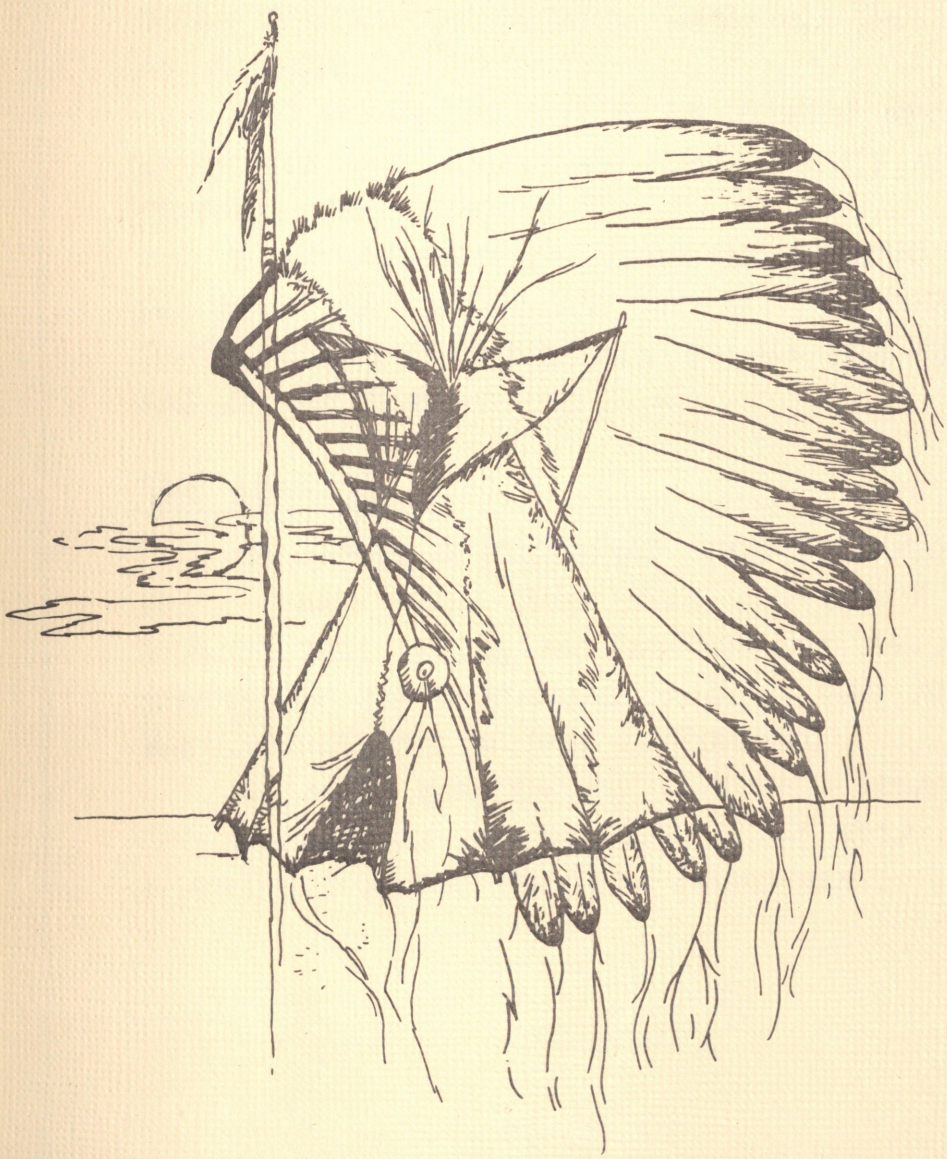
By bringing these thoughts to the fore at this time I hope to accomplish several things. First of all I think that I am providing a better framework by which my final solution might be judged. I am stating the means by which I will try to solve those goals as outlined in the

building program before I move towards a solution. It is imperative then that my solution show the results of working with the theory of existential space. Secondly, my progress report will consist mainly of the building program for the Native American Cultural Center and a graphic presentation of the theory of existential space. I sometimes wonder how this might be received in terms of a 'traditional' progress report outlining 'production' of the first quarter. I hope that these thoughts point out the relevence of an intellectual investigation and that this may also be considered progress.

The point in studying existential space is to improve my understanding of the relationship between man and his environment. The concept of existential space is based on the fact that any human action has a spatial aspect. Actions take place and need a more or less precisely defined spatial frame to take place. The concept has a double meaning; it denotes the objectively describable spatial aspects of an intersubjective form of life as well as the single person's image of the spatial relations which form part of his existence. We may therefore talk about 'public' and 'private' existential spaces.

Existential space can be understood as a hierarchy of interrelated characters. Whereas 'existential space' denotes the environmental image, 'architecture' comprises the forms which determine or result from this image. Architecture thus may be defined as a concretization of existential space. As such, architecture is a symbol-system expressing the characters and spatial relations which constitute the totality man-environment.

THE NATIVE AMERICAN FACTOR



STATEMENT OF THE THESIS

ANY SOCIETY NECESSARILY HAS A PARTICULAR 'STRUCTURE' WHICH SHOULD FIND A CORRESPONDING PHYSICAL FRAME. IN OTHER WORDS, IT IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE TO DEFINE SOCIALLY AND CULTURALLY DETERMINED BUILDING TASKS WHICH SHOULD BE TRANSLATED INTO ARCHITECTURAL SOLUTIONS.

THE PROJECT

A NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER – BILLINGS, MONTANA

THE GOALS

1. TO FOSTER ADEQUATE COMMUNICATION AMONG ALL PEOPLE OF INDIAN DESCENT AND BETWEEN THEM AND THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE.

2. TO PROVIDE THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT NEEDED FOR THE INDIAN TO DISCOVER AND ASSERT HIS ETHNIC IDENTITY AND, IN TURN, TO SYMBOLIZE THAT IDENTITY.

3. THE ARCHITECTURAL FRAME MUST BECOME A RICH EXPRESSION FOR THE INDIAN WAY OF LIFE AND THE FACT THAT WHAT TAKES PLACE WITHIN THAT FRAME IS OF IMPORTANCE TO ALL PEOPLES OF THE COMMUNITY AND OF THE STATE.

THE MEANS

THE THEORY OF EXISTENTIAL SPACE WILL PROVIDE THE MEANS BY WHICH I WILL ATTAIN THESE GOALS AND CREATE AN ARCHITECTURAL TOTALITY, THUS MEETING MY RESPONSIBILITY AS AN ARCHITECT TO UNDERSTAND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAN AND HIS ENVIRONMENT WHEN GIVING FORM TO THAT ENVIRONMENT.

ALL HUMAN CONSTRUCTION INVOLVES A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE NATURAL AND THE MAN-MADE. THAT RELATIONSHIP PHYSICALLY SHAPES THE HUMAN CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT.

ARCHITECTURAL SPACE

ARCHITECTURAL SPACE IS THE PHYSICAL COUNTERPART OF EXISTENTIAL SPACE AND MAY BE DEFINED AS A CONCRETIZATION OF EXISTENTIAL SPACE.

MAN'S RELATION TO ARCHITECTURAL SPACE CONISISTS IN TRYING TO INTEGRATE ITS STRUCTURE INTO HIS PERSONAL SCHEMATA AND ALSO IN TRANSLATING HIS SCHEMATA INTO CONCRETE ARCHITECTURAL STRUTURES.

VALUES INFLUENCE OUR CHOICE OF ALTERNATIVES AND MAKE OUR ACTION INTENTIONAL, WHICH IS TO SAY THAT BOTH THE ENVIRONMENTAL NEEDS AND THE ARCHITECTURAL FORMS WHICH SATISFY THEM ARE RESULT OF MEANINGFUL CHOICES. USUALLY THE PHYSICAL STIMULUS SYMBOLIZES A 'HIGHER' OBJECTIVE. WE EXPERIENCE A MEANING, AND WE INTERPRET THE SITUATION RELATIVE TO A SYSTEM OF VALUES. OUR PERCEPTION MUST BE BASED ON A VALUE SYSTEM WHICH GIVES THE STIMULUS AN ADEQUATE MEANING. THAT IS, 'INTENTIONAL DEPTH'.

'EXPRESSIVE' FORMS MANIFEST HIGHER OBJECTIVES WHICH ARE BASED ON VALUE SYSTEMS. EXPRESSING FORMS AND SYMBOLIC FORMS ARE SYNONYMS SIGNIFYING THAT MEASURABLE PHYSICAL FORMS (PERCEIVED OR PRODUCED) MEDIATE A HIGHER MEANING. THE SYMBOL-FUNCTION IS BASIC TO ALL HUMAN BEHAVIOR. SYMBOLS CONCRETIZE MAN'S VALUE-ORIENTED 'BEING IN THE WORLD' AND PROVIDE HIS EXPRESSIVENESS.

IN GENERAL, ARCHITECTURE SHOULD SERVE THE PUBLIC WORLD. ARCHITECTURAL SPACE CONCRETIZES A PUBLIC EXISTENTIAL SPACE WHICH INCLUDES MANY PRIVATE EXISTENTIAL SPACES. IT IS A SYBOLIC FORM WHICH MEDIATES THE HIGHER OBJECTS OF MAN'S WORLD THROUGH A CERTAIN STRUCTURAL SIMILARITY, WHEREBY THE PLACES, PATHS, DOMAINS AND LEVELS OF EXISTENTIAL SPACE FIND THEIR CONCRETE, PHYSICAL COUNTERPART.

CREATING ARCHITECTURAL SPACE MEANS INTEGRATING AN INTENDED FORM OF LIFE IN THE ENVIRONMENT.

ELEMENTS OF ARCHITECTURAL SPACE

ELEMENTARY INTERACTION

AS IN EXISTENTIAL SPACE, PLACE, PATH AND DOMAIN FORM AN INTEGRATED WHOLE – AN 'ARCHITECTURAL FIELD' – ALSO CONSISTING OF FORCES WHICH OUGHT TO BE BALANCED IN A STATE OF DYNAMIC EQUILIBRIUM.

PLACE & NODE

THE DEFINITION OF A PLACE IS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLES OF PROXIMITY AND CLOSURE. CENTER MEANS THE CREATION OF A PLACE OR NODE. NODES ARE THE STRATEGIC FOCI INTO WHICH THE OBSERVER CAN ENTER, TYPICALLY EITHER JUNCTIONS OF PATHS OR CONCRETIZATIONS OF SOME CHARICTERISTIC. A PLACE BECOMES A CENTER BECAUSE IT BOTH FUNCTIONS AS A GOAL IN EXISTENTIAL SPACE AND ALSO AS A DEPARTURE POINT. THE RESULTING TENSION CONSTITUTES THE ESSENCE OF ANY PLACE.

PATH & AXIS

PATHS ARE CHANNELS ALONG WHICH THE OBSERVER MOVES. THE CHARACTER OF A PATH IS DETERMINED BY ITS RELATION TO PLACES. THE ORGANIZING AXIS IS NOT INTENDED FOR REAL MOVEMENT BUT REPRESENTS A SYMBOLIC DIRECTION WHICH UNIFIES A NUMBER OF ELEMENTS AMONG THEMSELVES, AND OFTEN RELATES THEM TO A LARGER TOTALITY. IN GENERAL, THE DEFINITION OF A PLACE OR AXIS IS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF CONTINUITY, AND ON A CERTAIN SIMILARITY OF THE MASS OR SPACE ELEMENTS IN THE COMPOSITION.

DISTRICT & DOMAIN

IN OUR ENVIRONMENT WE MAY DISTINGUISH BETWEEN NATURAL DOMAINS AND THOSE FORMED BY MAN AS AN EXPRESSION OF A PARTICULAR ACTIVITY. IN BOTH CASES BOUNDARY AND TEXTURE ARE DEFINING PROPERTIES. DISTRICTS ARE AREAS WHICH THE OBSERVER CAN MENTALLY GO INSIDE OF, AND WHICH ARE RECOGNIZABLE AS HAVING SOME COMMON IDENTIFYING CHARACTER. THE TRANSITION FROM ONE DOMAIN TO ANOTHER A CRITICAL WHEN WE WANT TO CONCRETIZE A SYSTEM OF EXISTENTIAL DOMAINS.

LEVELS OF ARCHITECTURAL SPACE

THE LEVELS OF ARCHITECTURAL SPACE FORM A STRUCTURED TOTALITY WHICH CORRESPONDS TO THE STRUCTURE OF EXISTENTIAL SPACE. AS MAN'S IDENTITY IS ESTABLISHED IN RELATION TO THE TOTALITY OF EXISTENTIAL SPACE, ALL THE LEVELS OF ARCHITECTURAL SPACE MUST HAVE THEIR DEFINED IDENTITY. WITHOUT IT, MAN'S IMAGE OF HIS ENVIRONMENT WILL BE CONFUSED AND HIS OWN PERSONAL IDENTITY THREATENED.

THE 'FIELD' OF EXISTENTIAL SPACE IS REPRESENTED (CONCRETIZED) BY A CORRESPONDING ARCHITECTURAL FIELD. WHEN THE FIELDS OF THE DIFFERENT LEVELS INTERACT, A COMPLEX TOTALITY IS FORMED.

ANY ENCLOSURE HAS TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE ENVIRONMENT IN VARYING WAYS AND HAS A PARTICULAR INTERIOR STRUCTURE. THE VARIABLES OF INTERIOR SPACE INCLUDE PRIMARY FACTORS SUCH AS CENTRALIZATION AND CONTINUOUS BOUNDARY, DIRECTION, OPENING AND GUIDING ELEMENTS, AND SECONDARY PROPERTIES SUCH AS PROPORTION, TEXTURE, COLOR AND ILLUMINATION WHICH CAN BE USED TO REINFORCE OR CONTRADICT THE PRIMARY STRUCTURE.

ARCHITECTURAL COMPOSITION IS A SYNTHESIS OF TWO FUNDAMENTAL ASPECTS: SEPARATION AND UNIFICATION. ARTICULATION CONSISTS IN THE INTERACTION OF THESE TWO ASPECTS. SPACES, MASSES AND WALL ELEMENTS ARE SEPARATED TO EXPRESS THE FACT THAT ANY BUILDING CONSISTS OF DIFFERENT PARTS, FUNCTIONALLY OR SYMBOLICALLY DETERMINED. AS THESE PARTS ARE PARTS OF AN ORGANISM, THEY MUST BE UNIFIED BY CONTINUITY, REPETITION (SIMILARITY), AND INTERDEPENDENCE OR INTERPENETRATION.

"ARCHITECTURE OCCURS AT THE MEETING OF INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR FORCES OF USE AND SPACE. THESE INTERIOR AND ENVIRONMENTAL FORCES ARE BOTH GENERAL AND PARTICULAR, GENERIC AND CIRCUMSTANTIAL."

— VENTURI

SYMBOLISM

THE ARCHITECTURAL SOLUTION MUST SHOW AN AWARENESS OF THE PART THAT SYMBOLISM PLAYS IN THE INDIAN CULTURE. THE ARCHITECTURAL SYMBOL-SYSTEM ALLOWS MAN TO EXPERIENCE A MEANINGFUL ENVIRONMENT, WHEREVER HE MIGHT BE ON EARTH, AND IN THIS WAY HELPS HIM TO FIND AN EXISTENTIAL FOOTHOLD. THE TRUE PURPOSE OF ARCHITECTURE IS TO HELP MAKE HUMAN EXISTENCE MEANINGFUL.

TAKEN TOGETHER THE SYMBOL-SYSTEMS AND THEIR MANISFESTATIONS CONSTITUTE THE COMMON ORDER WE CALL CULTURE. ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT TO THE INDIAN CULTURE ARE THOSE CONEPTS UNIVERSAL TO MOST ALL TRIBES:

ORIENTATION

WITH RESPECT TO THE CARDINAL POINTS.

THE 'CENTER'

AS A FOCAL POINT OF ACTIVITY AND COMMUNICATION, AND AS A POTENTIAL ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE, AROUND WHICH OTHER STRUCTURES OF PART SOLUTIONS NATURALLY ARRANGE THEMSELVES. EVERY PLACE WHERE A MEANING BECOMES MANIFEST IS A CENTER.

THE CIRCLE

"EVERYTHING THE POWER OF THE WORLD DOES IS DONE IN A CIRCLE. THE SKY IS ROUND, AND I HAVE HEARD THAT THE EARTH IS ROUND, LIKE A BALL, AND SO ARE ALL THE STARS. THE WIND, IN ITS GREATEST POWER, WHIRLS. BIRDS MAKE THEIR NESTS IN CIRCLES, FOR THEIRS IS THE SAME RELIGION AS OURS. THE SUN COMES FORTH AND GOES DOWN AGAIN IN A CIRCLE. THE MOON DOES THE SAME AND BOTH ARE ROUND. EVEN THE SEASONS FORM A GREAT CIRCLE IN THEIR CHANGING, AND ALWAYS COME BACK AGAIN TO WHERE THEY WERE. THE LIFE OF A MAN IS A CIRCLE FROM CHILDHOOD TO CHILDHOOD, AND SO IT IS IN EVERYTHING WHERE POWER MOVES."

— BLACK ELK, OGLALA SIOUX

SPECIFIC NEEDS

LIBRARY

TO HOUSE LITERATURE AND DOCUMENTS OF ALL TYPES THAT ARE OF IMPORTANCE TO THE PRESERVATION AND PROMOTION OF INDIAN CULTURE.

ART GALLERY AND/OR MUSEUM

MUST PROVIDE GENEROUS DISPLAY AREA, BOTH FOR TRAVELING EXHIBITS AND TO EXHIBIT AND SELL WORK DONE BY PEOPLE AT THE CENTER.

CLASSROOMS AND STUDIOS

TO PROVIDE A PLACE FOR PROGRAMS DESIGNED AND TAUGHT BY INDIAN PEOPLE TO PROMOTE THEIR IDEALS, CONTEMPORARY ISSUES, CRAFTS, ETC.

MULTI-PURPOSE FIELDHOUSE

TO MEET THE RECREATIONAL NEEDS AND TO PROVIDE AN AREA OF LARGE CAPACITY FOR PARTIES, CONCERTS, LECTURES, POW-WOWS, ETC.

LOCKERS, KITCHEN, CAFETERIA, CEREMONIAL AREA (OUTDOORS)

TO BE LOCATED INTEGRALLY WITH THE FIELDHOUSE.

MEETING ROOMS AND/OR AUDITORIUM

TO PROVIDE PLACES FOR SMALL BUSINESS MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES.

OFFICES

TO ACCOMMODATE ADMINISTRATION FACILITIES FOR THE CENTER AND TO HOUSE ANTICIPATED OFFICE NEEDS FOR LOCAL, STATE, AND NATIONAL PROGRAMS WHICH MAY BE LOCATED IN THE CENTER.

SPACE PERCEPTION

PERCEPTION MEDIATES OUR WORLD

BUT: PERCEPTION AIMS AT VALID ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE ENVIRONMENT. THESE ASSUMPTIONS VARY ACCORDING TO THE SITUATIONS IN WHICH WE ARE TAKING PART AND ARE A PRODUCT OF ANY INDIVIDUAL'S MOTIVATIONS AND EXPER.

AND: ARCHITECTURAL SPACE EXISTS INDEPENDENTLY OF THE CASUAL PERCEIVER AND HAS CENTERS AND DIRECTIONS OF ITS OWN.

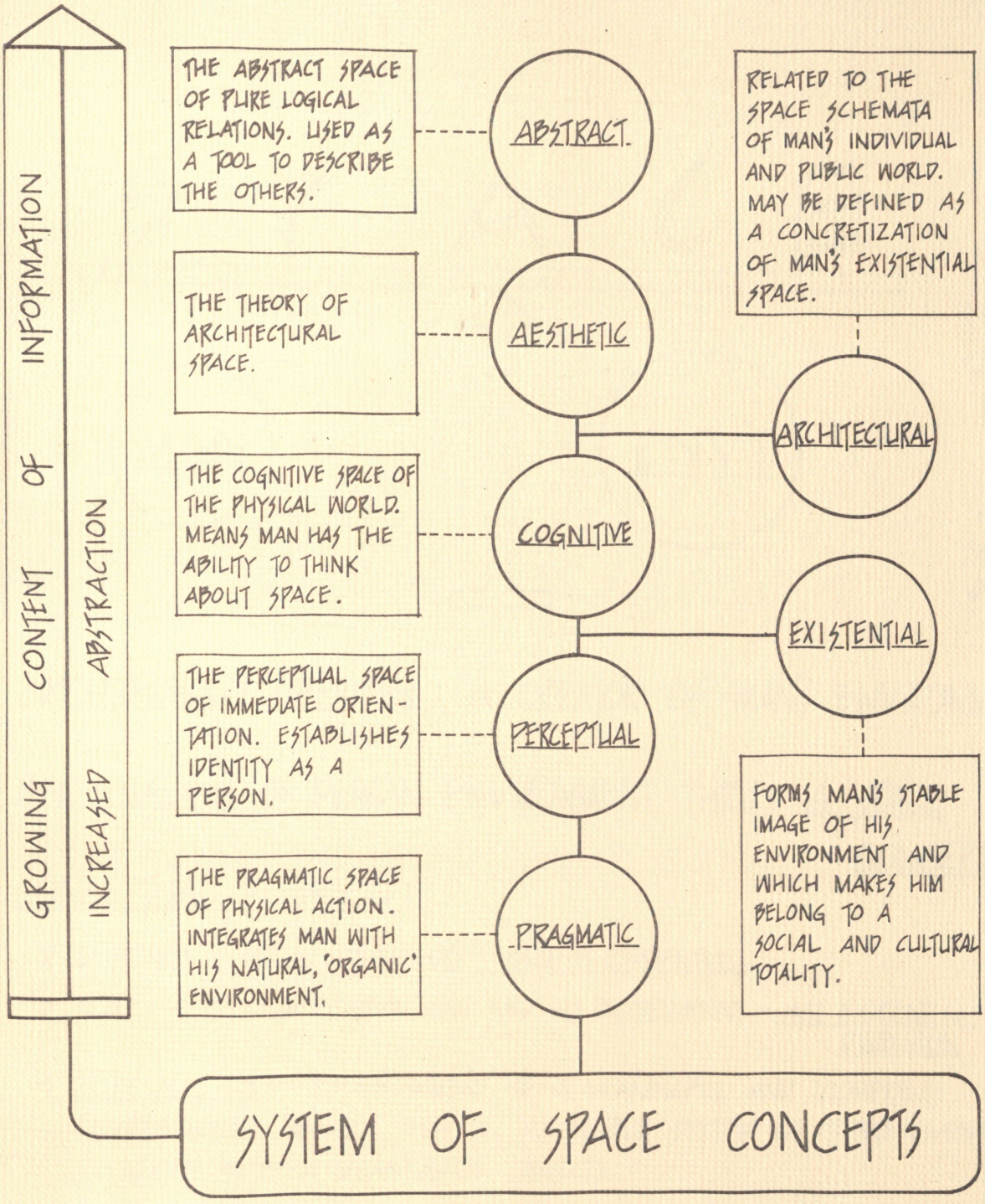
THEREFORE: ANY PERCEPTION MUST BE REFERRED TO A MORE STABLE SYSTEM OF SCHEMATA (IMAGES) TO BECOME MEANINGFUL.

OUR SPACE CONSCIOUSNESS IS BASED UPON OPERATIONAL SCHEMATA, THAT IS, EXPERIENCES WITH THINGS. SCHEMA: A TYPICAL REACTION TO A SITUATION. SCHEMA ARE FORMED DURING MENTAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL AND HIS ENVIRONMENT. BY THIS PROCESS A MAN'S ACTIONS ARE GROUPED INTO COHERENT WHOLES. SCHEMATA ARE CULTURALLY DETERMINED AND COMPRISE QUALITATIVE PROPERTIES RESULTING FROM THE NEED FOR AFFECTIVE ORIENTATION TO THE ENVIR'T.

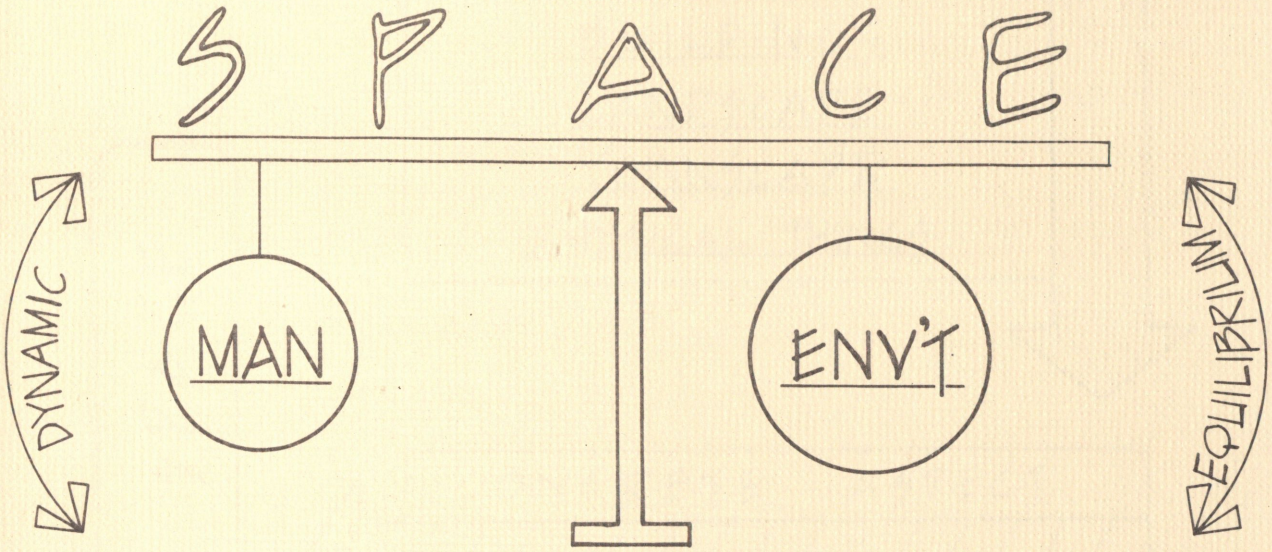
SPACE SCHEMATA: COMPOSITION OF ELEMENTS WHICH HAVE A CERTAIN INVARIANCE, SUCH AS UNIVERSAL ELEMENTARY STRUCTURES (ARCHITYPES) AND SOCIALLY OR CULTURALLY CONDITIONED STRUCTURES, AND SOME PERSONAL IDIOSYNCRASIES. TOGETHER THESE MAKE UP MAN'S IMAGE OF HIS ENVIRONMENT AND MAY THEREFORE BE UNIFIED IN THE CONCEPT EXISTENTIAL SPACE.

PERCEPTUAL SPACE, ON THE OTHER HAND, VARIES CONTINUOUSLY. THESE VARIATIONS MAY BE LINKED TO FORM MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES BY ASSIMILATING THEM TO THE SUBJECT'S SCHEMATA WHICH MAY THEN BE MODIFIED BY THE EXPERIENCE.

THEREFORE: WE SHOULD TRY AND UNDERSTAND SPACE AS A DIMENSION OF HUMAN EXISTANCE, RATHER THAN AS A DIMENSION OF THOUGHT OR PERCEPTION.


GROWING CONTENT OF INFORMATION
INCREASED ABSTRACTION
THE ABSTRACT SPACE OF PURE LOGICAL RELATIONS. USED AS A TOOL TO DESCRIBE THE OTHERS.
ABSTRACT
THE THEORY OF ARCHITECTURAL SPACE.
AESTHETIC
THE COGNITIVE SPACE OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD. MEANS MAN HAS THE ABILITY TO THINK ABOUT SPACE.
COGNITIVE
THE PERCEPTUAL SPACE OF IMMEDIATE ORIENTATION. ESTABLISHES IDENTITY AS A PERSON.
PERCEPTUAL
THE PRAGMATIC SPACE OF PHYSICAL ACTION. INTEGRATES MAN WITH HIS NATURAL, 'ORGANIC' ENVIRONMENT.
PRAGMATIC
RELATED TO THE SPACE SCHEMATA OF MAN'S INDIVIDUAL AND PUBLIC WORLD. MAY BE DEFINED AS A CONCRETIZATION OF MAN'S EXISTENTIAL SPACE.
ARCHITECTURAL
EXISTENTIAL
FORMS MAN'S STABLE IMAGE OF HIS ENVIRONMENT AND WHICH MAKES HIM BELONG TO A SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TOTALITY.
SYSTEM OF SPACE CONCEPTS

b



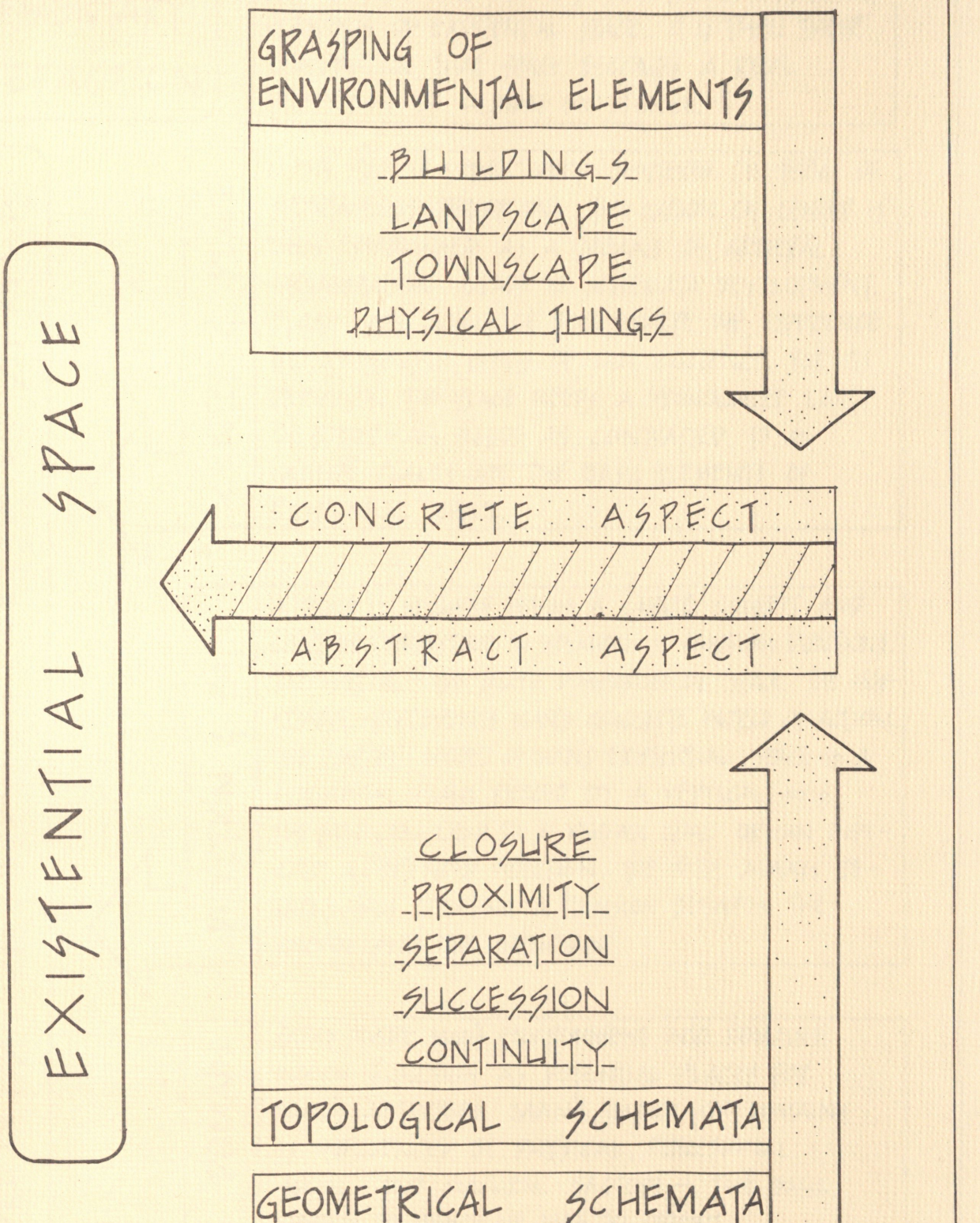
ARCHITECTURAL DESIGNER: A CREATOR OF MAN'S ENVIRONMENT

AN ANALYSIS OF HUMAN ENVIRONMENT THRU: A SPACE CONCEPT

CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION:

1. EXISTENCE IS SPATIAL. THEREFORE SPACE IS EXISTENTIAL.
2. SPACE: A RELATION BETWEEN MAN AND HIS ENVIRONMENT – AN EXISTENTIAL DIMENSION
3. EXISTENTIAL SPACE: ESTABLISHMENT OF A MEANINGFUL AND COHERENT ENVIRONMENTAL 'IMAGE.' THAT IS, A STABLE SYSTEM OF THREE-DIMENSIONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN MEANINGFUL OBJECTS.
4. ARCHITECTURAL SPACE: A CONCRETIZATION OF MAN'S EXISTENTIAL SPACE.
5. THE KEY CONSTRUCT: EXISTENTIAL SPACE.

ARCHITECTS MUST 'UNDERSTAND' AND UNIFY SPATIAL RELATIONS AS A DIMENSION OF HUMAN EXISTENCE.


EXISTENTIAL SPACE
GRASPING OF ENVIRONMENTAL ELEMENTS
BUILDINGS
LANDSCAPE
TOWNSCAPE
PHYSICAL THINGS
CONCRETE ASPECT
ABSTRACT ASPECT
CLOSURE
PROXIMITY
SEPARATION
SUCCESSION
CONTINUITY
TOPOLOGICAL SCHEMATA
GEOMETRICAL SCHEMATA

d

ELEMENTARY INTERACTION

PLACES, PATHS AND DOMAINS ARE THE CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS OF EXISTENTIAL SPACE. IT IS THRU THEIR COMBINATION THAT SPACE BECOMES A REAL DIMENSION OF HUMAN EXISTENCE.

ELEMENTS OF EXISTENTIAL SPACE

CENTER & PLACE

MAN'S SPACE IS SUBJECTIVELY CENTERED (IN TERMS OF SPONTANEOUS PERCEPTION). THE NOTION OF CENTER IS THUS ESTABLISHED AS A MEANS OF GENERAL ORGANIZATION. LEADS TO SCHEMATA DEVELOPMENT. PLACES ARE GOALS OR FOCI WHERE WE EXPERIENCE THE MEANINGFUL EVENTS OF OUR EXISTENCE. FOR ITS DEFINITION THE PLACE NEEDS A PRONOUNCED LIMIT OR BORDER - AN INSIDE AS CONTRASTED TO AN OUTSIDE. PLACES ARE THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF EXISTENTIAL SPACE.

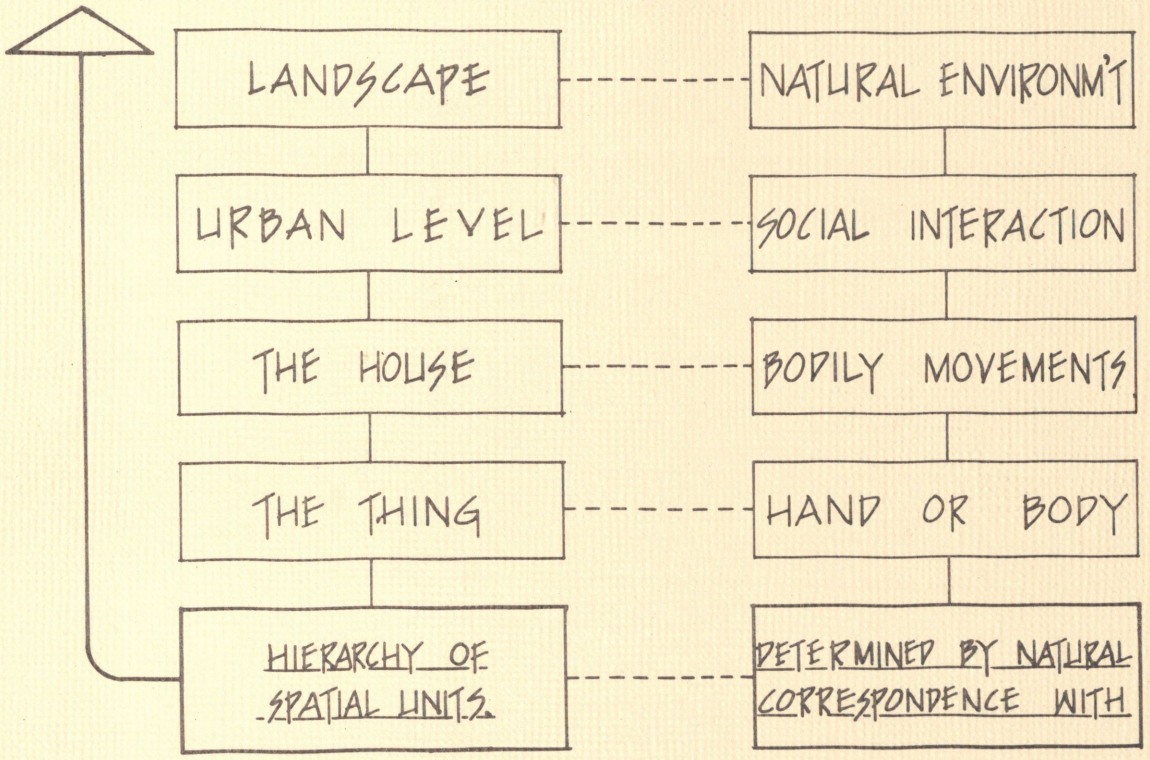
DIRECTION & PATH

A PLACE IS SITUATED WITHIN A LARGER CONTEXT AND CAN'T BE UNDERSTOOD IN ISOLATION. IT CONTAINS DIRECTIONS. THE VERTICAL - THE SACRED DIMENSION OF SPACE. THE HORIZONTAL - REPRESENTS MAN'S CONCRETE WORLD OF ACTION. THE SIMPLEST MODEL OF MAN'S EXISTENTIAL SPACE IS A HORIZONTAL PLANE PIERCED BY A VERTICAL AXIS. THE PATH CAN LEAD TO A KNOWN GOAL OR CAN INDICATE AN INTENDED DIRECTION. THE PATH ALWAYS RETURNS THUS CREATING A TENSION BETWEEN THE KNOWN AND THE UNKNOWN.

AREA & DOMAIN

PATHS DIVIDE MAN'S ENVIRONMENT INTO DOMAINS, WHICH FUNCTION AS POTENTIAL PLACES FOR MAN'S ACTIVITIES. MAN'S IMAGE OF DOMAINS IS INFLUENCED BY PHYSICAL, FUNCTIONAL, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL FACTORS - THE BASIC OBJECTS TO WHICH HE HAS TO ORIENT.

LEVELS OF EXISTENTIAL SPACE



THE SYSTEM OF LEVELS, THE DIFFERENT SCHEMATA DEVELOPED ON EACH LEVEL, AND THE INTERACTION OF LEVELS CONSTITUTE THE STRUCTURE OF EXISTENTIAL SPACE. THE LEVELS CAN REPRESENT EACH OTHER. A REPRESENTAION FROM THE TOP TOWARDS THE BOTTEM SHOWS THAT THE HIGER LEVELS ARE CONCRETIZED BY THE LOWER:

1. MAN 'RECEIVES' THE ENVIRONMENT AND 2. MAKES IT FOCUS IN CONCRETE BUILDINGS AND THINGS 3. THEREBY ARTICULATING THE ENVIRONMENT

A REPRESENTATION FROM THE BOTTOM UP MEANS MAN PROJECTS HIMSELF INTO THE ENV'T:

1. MAN COMMUNICATES SOMETHING TO THE ENVIRONMENT 2. WHICH IN TURN UNIFIES HIS 'THINGS' IN A LARGER MEANGINGFUL CONTEXT

THE LEVEL HIERARCHY OF EXISTENTIAL SPACE IS THEREFORE A PRODUCT OF MAN'S TAKING POSSESSION OF HIS ENVIRONMENT.

EXISTENTIAL SPACE CAN ALSO BE DESCRIBED AS A SIMULTANEOUS TOTALITY WHERE THE LEVELS INTERACT TO FORM A COMPLEX DYNAMIC FIELD. THE STRUCTURE OF EXISTENTIAL SPACE EXPRESSES THE INCESSENT TENSIONS INHERENT IN LIFE.

THE SITE

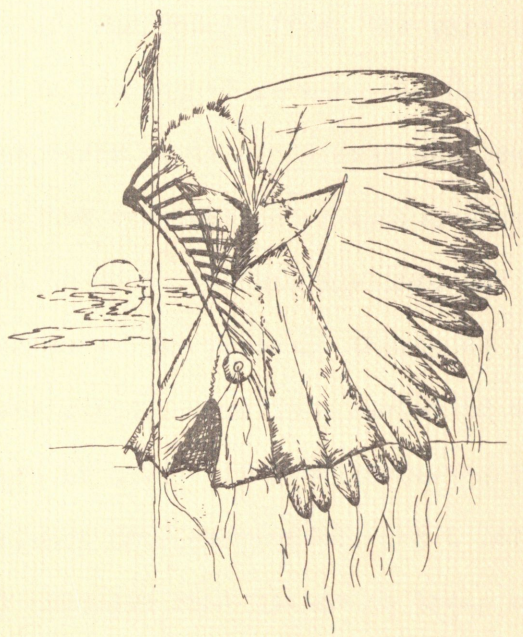
In choosing a site within the state for the Native American Cultural Center there were several factors that led to Billings being chosen as the most appropriate. Although Billings is not the geographical center of the state, (some people felt that Great Falls should be the site due to its more central location within the state) my research indicated that it has in the past been the center of many Indian-oriented activites and the base of several Indian support activities. This was a major factor in choosing to place the Center in Billings. In addition, Billings, more than any other of the state's large cities, shows a great potential for future growth. Its present growth pattern has been likened recently to the same type of trends that Denver, Colorado exhibited prior to becoming the major city that it is today. All the factors I mentioned in my opening comments concerning the need and the relevance of building a Native American Cultural Center in the state will be amplified as Billings enters this period of accelerating growth.

Within the city of Billings itself there were several indicators for site selection. Most of the city's Indian population lives within the 'South side' or that part of the city lying to the south of Montana Avenue. Placement of the Center within this area would make it centrally located to the majority of its users. It would also act as a catalyst to rejuvenate this older part of the city. Many people are now becoming active in various activities aimed at stimulating civic pride in the residents of this area. Construction of the Center would certainly work towards this end - not only in that particular area but for the city as a

whole. I chose a site adjacent to South Park and one block off of south twenty-seventh street. Being next to the park extends the list of possible uses of the Center in that it provides additional area for outside activities related to the Center. Twenty-seventh street is the major access to the central business district from the interstate highway and the city of Billings has recently announced plans to buy all lots adjacent to this street and convert this entrance to the city from its present neglected state into a green-belt avenue. Thus the Native American Center, being on south Broadway, just one block away from this street, will not only have ready access itself but will also become a focal point for the effort to rejuvenate the South side.

THE SOLUTION

THE NATIVE AMERICAN FACTOR



THE NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER IN BILLINGS, MONTANA WILL PROVIDE AREAS FOR SOCIAL, CULTURAL, RECREATIONAL, AND CEREMONIAL NEEDS OF THE STATE'S INDIAN POPULATION, WITH INITIAL EMPHASIS TO BE PLACED ON THE CULTURAL ASPECTS.

THE SOLUTION

The basic design directives in reaching a solution for the center are the theory of existential space and those symbolic ideals universal to most all Indian tribes.

In designing a Native American Cultural Center I have considered it to be critically important that the architectural solution must show an awareness of, and result from, the part that symbolism plays in the Indian culture. In looking to develop the Center's 'character' I placed a great deal of emphasis on the fact that the common order we call culture is derived by the combination of symbol-systems and their manisfestations. From birth to death Indians are enfolded in symbols. These symbols are much, much more than pleasant things to be speculated about and toyed with in one's mind; life is a symbol to be lived. Symbols in turn teach the meaning of life. If architecture's true purpose is to help make human experience more meaningful, and I believe that it is, then the architectural solution must allude to these symbolic concepts in such a way as to allow the user to experience a meaningful cultural environment. Architecture is in fact a symbol-system expressing the characters and spatial relations which constitute the totality - man-environment. Lame Deer, a Sioux medicine man, says, "We try to understand symbols not with the head but with the heart, and we need no more than a hint to give us the meaning."

The concepts I worked with were orientation, the 'center', and the circle. The Indian's primary symbol is the circle and, as such, the circle became a primary force in design decisions. The outdoor amphitheater

is positioned so as to become the 'center' of the building. It serves as the organizing principle around which all functional parts of the building are arranged - a focal point of design. The symbolic power of the circle is shown in the relationship of the building to the circular amphitheater. The front facade of the building picks up the curve of the amphitheater and partially encloses it as it does so. Most interior and exterior walls are either extended radii of the circle or coincide with lines of circumference lying outside the amphitheater. The building thus becomes subordinate to the power of the circle and is symbolically determined. With respect to orientation, the building only partially encloses the amphitheater so that it has an open exposure to the East - thus facing the sun as it rises each morning to give light and life to the world.

The properties of existentialism come into play in a more subtle manner and are more difficult to describe verbally. The conceptual definition and construct of existential space and its relationship to architectural space, its physical counterpart, has been presented previously in the progress report. The following comments concerning the design solution are presented in terms of the definitions contained therin.

The concept of existential space is based on the fact that that any human action has a spatial aspect. Actions take place and need a more or less precisely defined frame to take place. The framework for these actions is existential space which is constituted at the outset by experienced meanings. The character of the Center is determined thru the revelations of meanings in particular spaces.

The faculties of abstraction and generalization, or induction, are the basic distinctions of man, and the experience of meaning his basic need. A purpose of architecture is to make meanings manifest as a concrete system of places, paths, and domains. In so doing, architecture conserves and communicates experienced existential meanings.

Place, path and domain form an integrated whole, or structured totality which corresponds to the structure of existential space. I believe that the manner with which I dealt with these principles in arriving at an architectural solution will be self-evident to anyone who may take the time to study the building closely, thus belying the need for an extended verbal explanation of the results at this point.

In working with the interior structure I concentrated my design efforts on the primary variables of interior space - specifically such things as centralization and continuous boundary, direction, opening and guiding elements, proportion, texture and illumination.

The exterior composition consists of spaces, masses, and wall elements arranged so as to express the varying functional requirements within but unified through continuity, interpenetration, and a certain degree of repetition.

In perceiving the articulate symbol, a man experiences an act of identification which gives his individual existance meaning by relating it to a complex of natural and human dimensions. I believe that the solution I have designed would be fully capable af inducing such a reaction in its users.

And lastly, the building task comprises the aspects of the environment which most concerns architects. It was essential for the solution in this case to create a structure with the capacity to meet a variety of building tasks, due not only to present specific needs but also in recognition of the fact that those needs may change over time with changes in personnel. The building exhibits the flexibility to accommodate any such changes.

ANY SOCIETY NECESSARILY HAS A PARTICULAR 'STRUCTURE' WHICH SHOULD FIND A CORRESPONDING PHYSICAL FRAME. IN OTHER WORDS, IT IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE TO DEFINE SOCIALLY AND CULTURALLY DETERMINED BUILDING TASKS WHICH SHOULD BE TRANSLATED INTO ARCHITECTURAL SOLUTIONS.

THE PROJECT:

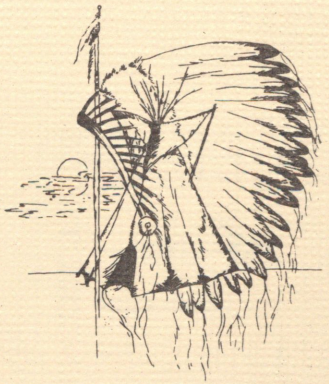
THE NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER IN BILLINGS, MONTANA WILL PROVIDE AREAS FOR SOCIAL, CULTURAL, RECREATIONAL, AND CEREMONIAL NEEDS OF THE STATE'S INDIAN POPULATION, WITH INITIAL EMPHASIS TO BE PLACED ON THE CULTURAL ASPECTS.

THE GOALS:

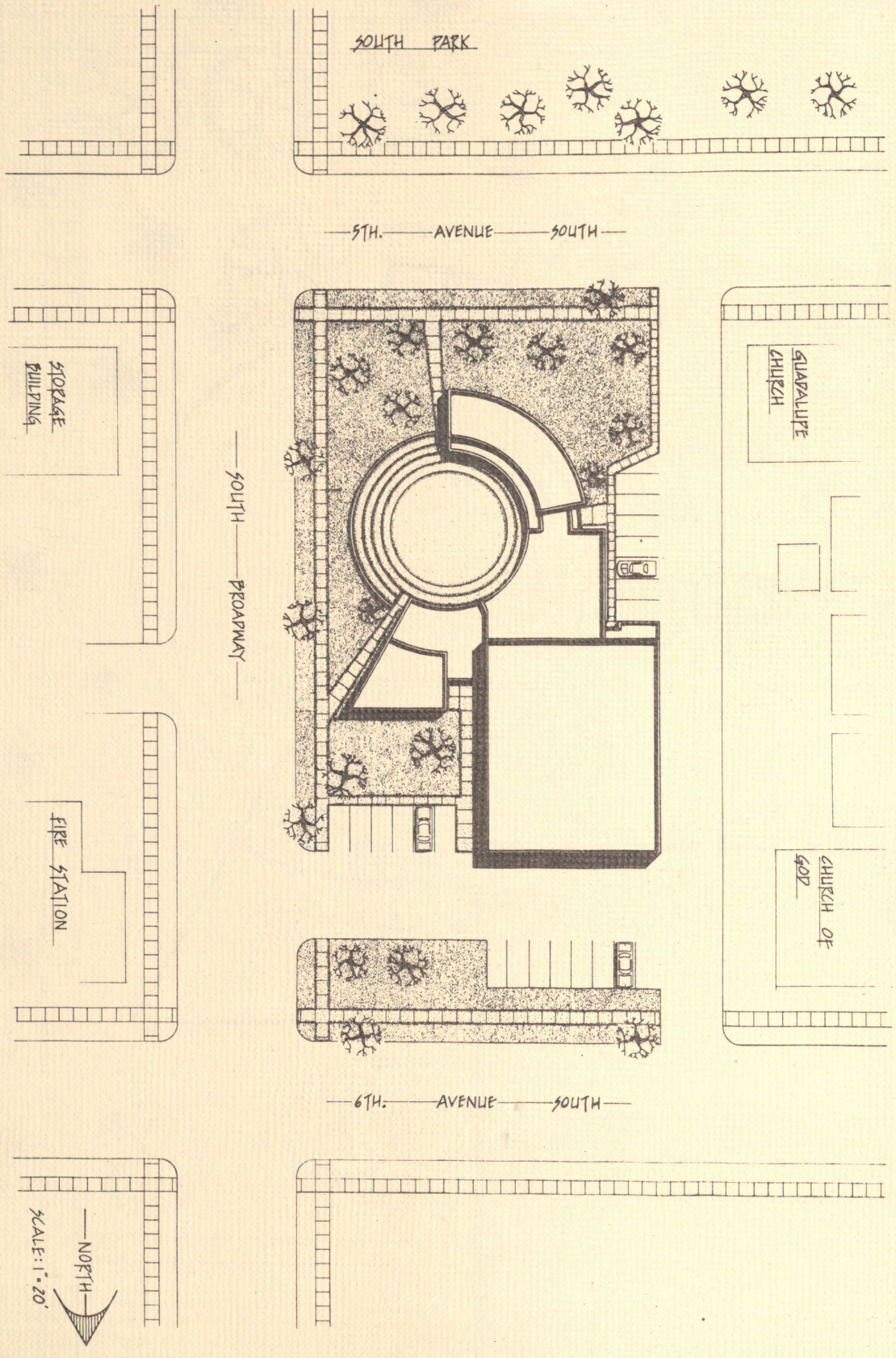
1. TO FOSTER ADEQUATE COMMUNICATION AMONG ALL PEOPLE OF INDIAN DESCENT AND BETWEEN THEM AND THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE.

2. TO PROVIDE THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT NEEDED FOR THE INDIAN TO DISCOVER AND ASSERT HIS ETHNIC IDENTITY AND, IN TURN, TO SYMBOLIZE THAT IDENTITY.

3. THE ARCHITECTURAL FRAME MUST BECOME A RICH EXPRESSION FOR THE INDIAN WAY OF LIFE AND THE FACT THAT WHAT TAKES PLACE WITHIN THAT FRAME IS OF IMPORTANCE TO ALL PEOPLES OF THE COMMUNITY AND OF THE STATE.



NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER | THESIS STATEMENT

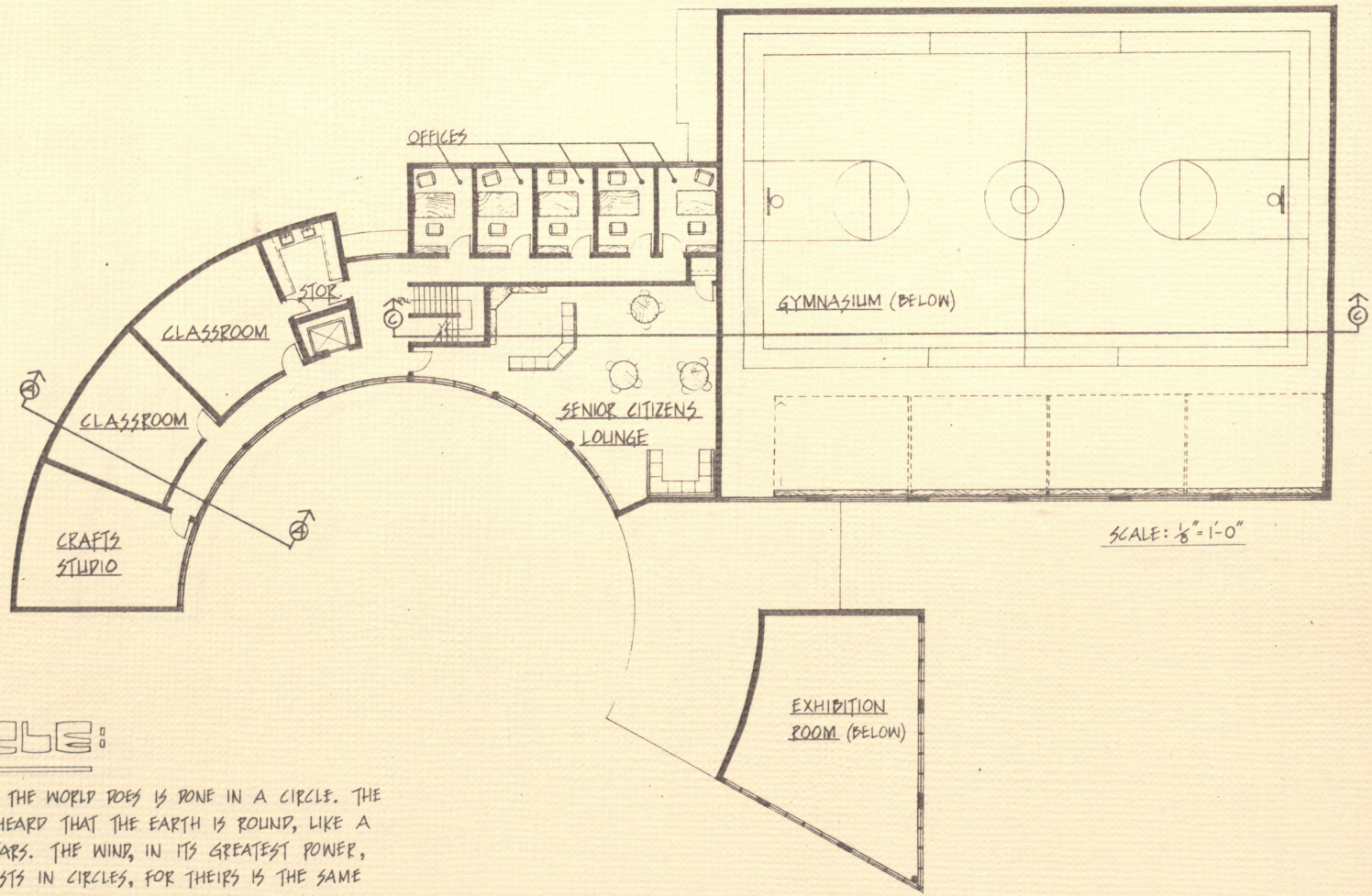


N NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER

SITE PLAN

NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER

FIRST FLOOR



SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

THE CIRCLE:

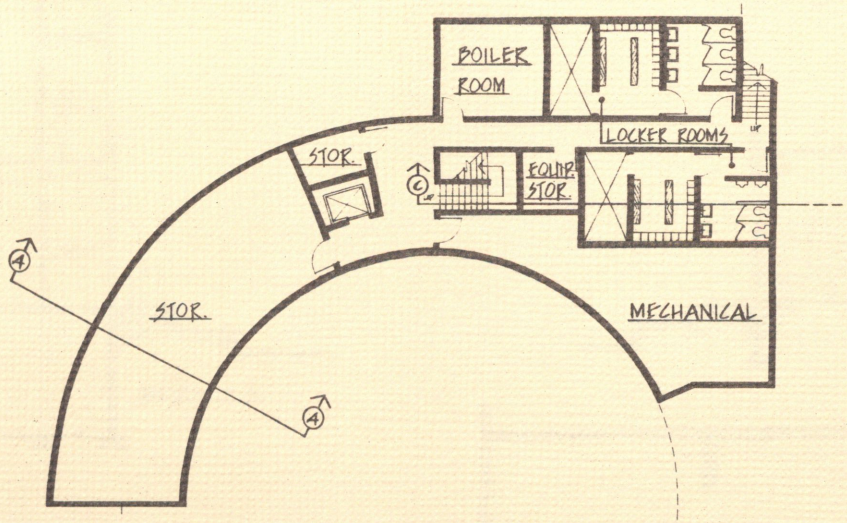
"EVERYTHING THE POWER OF THE WORLD DOES IS DONE IN A CIRCLE. THE SKY IS ROUND, AND I HAVE HEARD THAT THE EARTH IS ROUND, LIKE A BALL, AND SO ARE ALL THE STARS. THE WIND, IN ITS GREATEST POWER, WHIRLS. BIRDS MAKE THEIR NESTS IN CIRCLES, FOR THEIRS IS THE SAME RELIGION AS OURS. THE SUN COMES FORTH AND GOES DOWN AGAIN IN A CIRCLE. THE MOON DOES THE SAME AND BOTH ARE ROUND. EVEN THE SEASONS FORM A GREAT CIRCLE IN THEIR CHANGING, AND ALWAYS COME BACK AGAIN TO WHERE THEY WERE. THE LIFE OF A MAN IS A CIRCLE FROM CHILDHOOD TO CHILDHOOD, AND SO IT IS IN EVERYTHING WHERE POWER MOVES."

— BLACK ELK, OGLALA SIOUX

SECOND FLOOR

NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER

4



SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER

BASEMENT

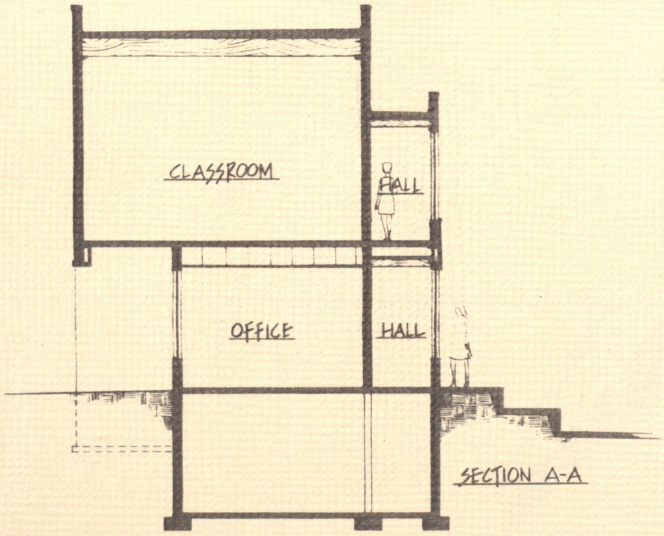
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THE 'CENTER':

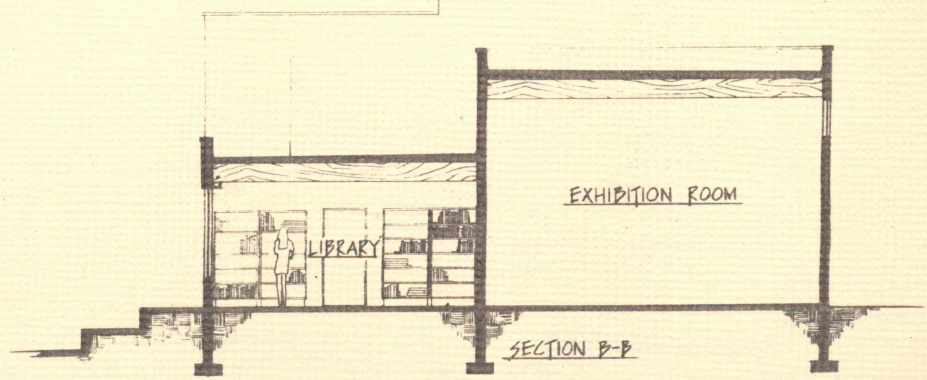
THE CONCEPT OF THE 'CENTER' IS UNIVERSAL TO THE CULTURES OF MOST INDIAN TRIBES. THE CENTER SERVES AS A FOCAL POINT OF ACTIVITY AND COMMUNICATION, AND AS A POTENTIAL ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE, AROUND WHICH OTHER STRUCTURES OF PART SOLUTIONS NATURALLY ARRANGE THEMSELVES.

"WE TRY TO UNDERSTAND SYMBOLS NOT WITH OUR HEADS BUT WITH OUR HEARTS, AND WE NEED NO MORE THAN A HINT TO SHOW US THE MEANING."

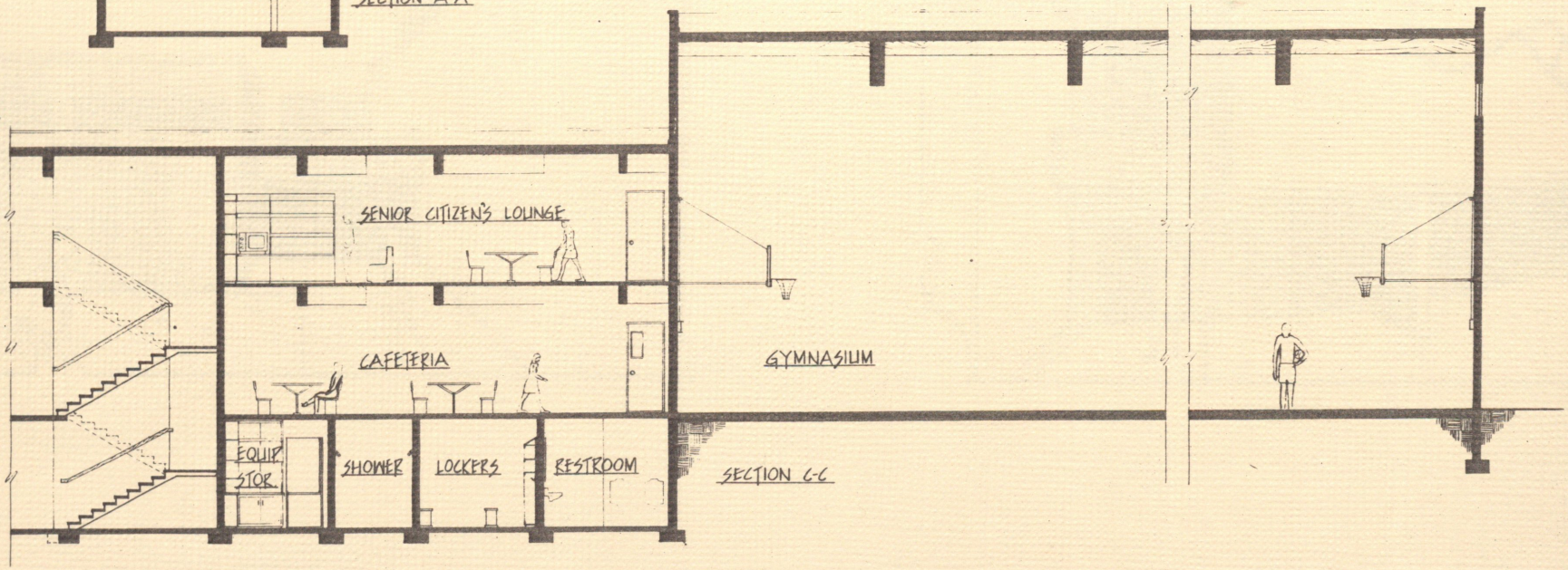
— LAME DEER, A SIOUX MEDICINE MAN



SECTION A-A



SECTION B-B

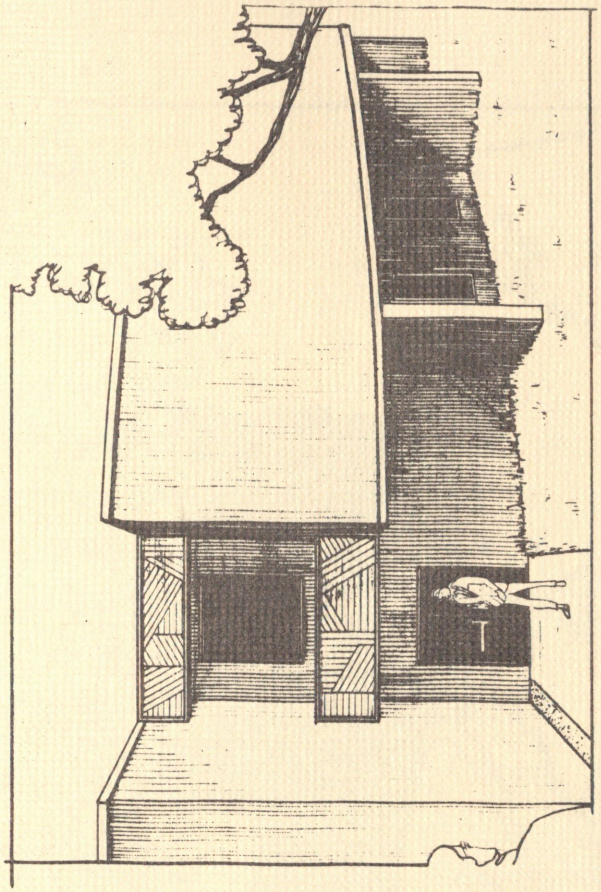


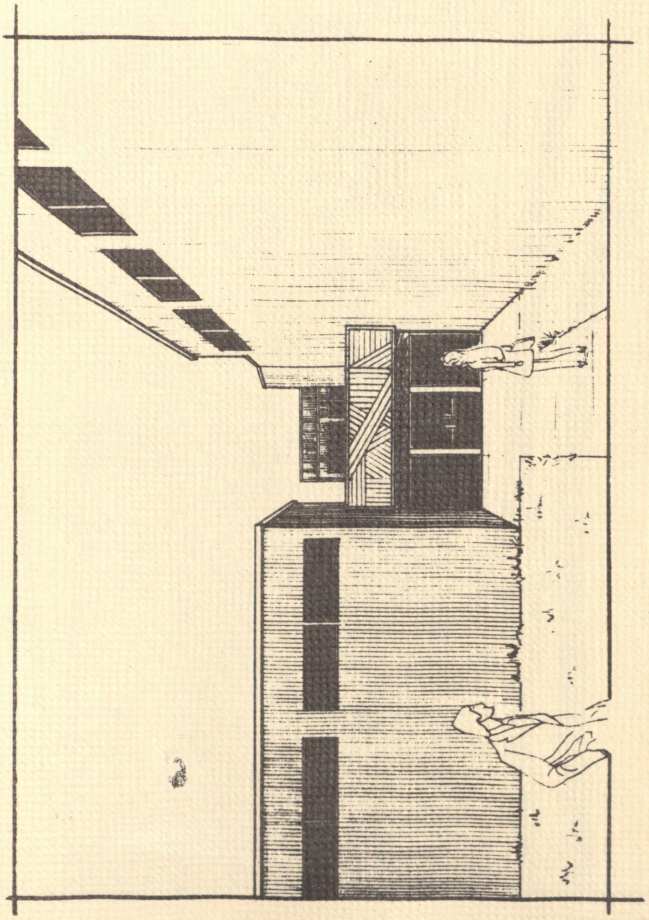
SECTION C-C

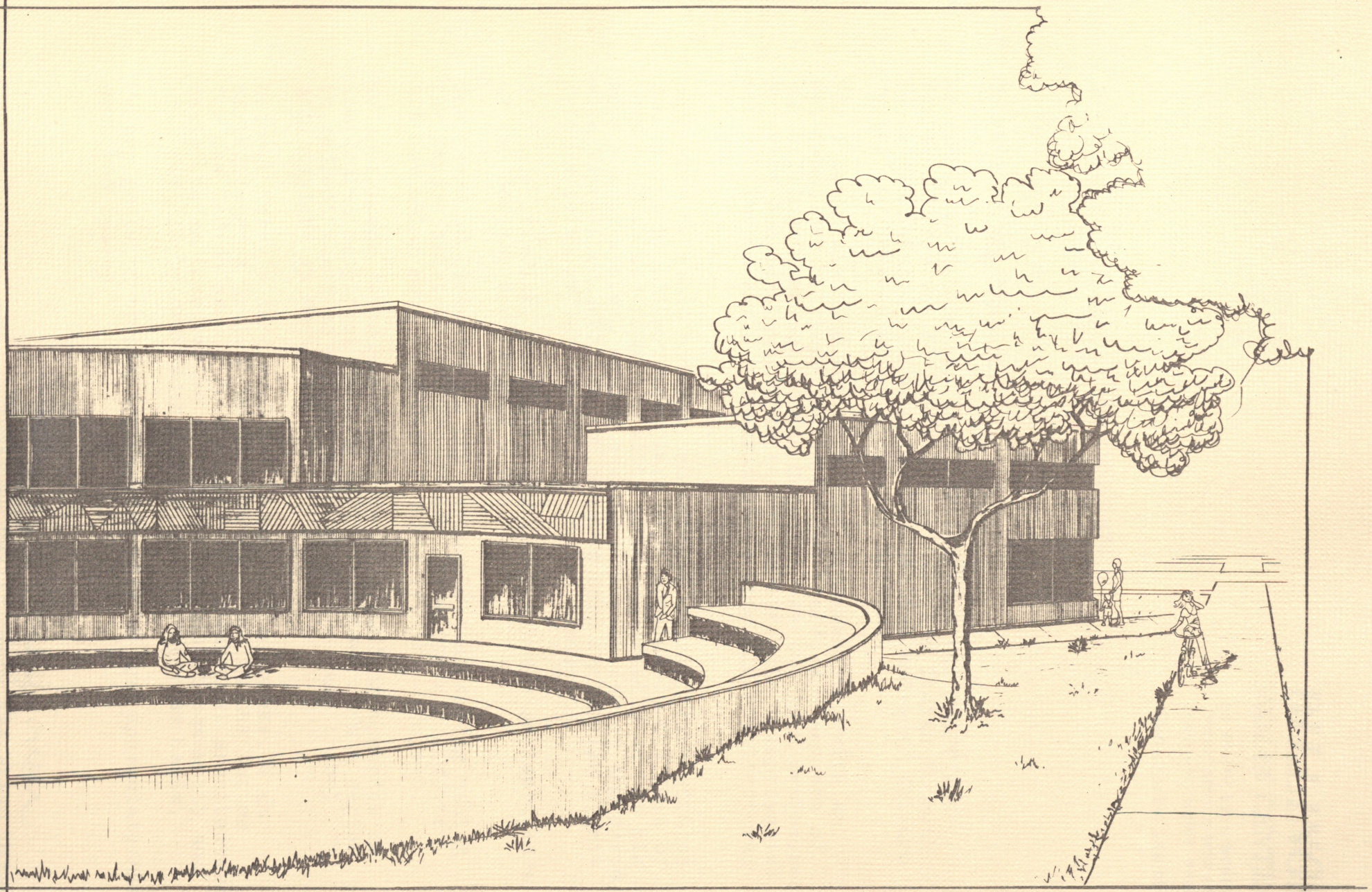
NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER

SECTIONS

6







BILLINGS
INDIAN CENTER

23 SOUTH 27TH STREET
POST OFFICE BOX 853
BILLINGS, MONT. 59103

PHONE (406) 248-1648

June 5, 1976

To Whom It May Concern:

Mr. Terry Wetzsteon has been working with the staff and Board of Directors of the Billings American Indian Council in developing and planning for the "Native American Culture Center" to be located in Billings, Montana.

The initial planning was developed cooperatively with Mr. Wetsteon, the Billings Indian Center staff, and members of the Billings American Indian Council. As the idea progressed, Mr. Wetsteon continually impressed us with his receptiveness and ability to apply recommendations into his architectural design.

Each week he would consult and discuss developments with us and as the arechitectural plans were presented, the idea of this project becoming a reality began materializing as his work was presented; mainly because everyone was so impressed with Terry's conceptions implemented into the design signifying a total reflection of the Indian community.

His understanding, patience, and attitude were as impressive as the designs and project plans.

The Board of Directors is now seriously considering making the Native American Culture Center a reality and efforts are now being made to obtain funding for this project.

We anticipate favorable decisions from funding agencies as the Indian people of Montana definitely need such a center to reflect the rich culture present by the many tribal affiliations in Montana.

Without Terry's hard work and consistent progress, I am certain such a project would have been far in the future for the Indian people in Montana. His beautiful architectural design is an inspiration to the entire Indian community and will definitely draw much support on a statewide basis.

We are grateful to him for working with us and appreciate his work and talent.

Sincerely,

Sybil L. Colliflower

Sybil L. Colliflower, Executive Director

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