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Center for Craft Receives Planning Grant from Cherokee Preservation Foundation for Cherokee Basketry Public Art Parklet

ASHEVILLE, NC (December, 2020) – The Center for Craft is working to preserve and advance the craft legacy of western North Carolina through the planning and creation of a public art parklet. Located on the ancestral lands of the Anikituwahgi, now known as the Cherokee people, and titled “The Basket,” the parklet will be a work of public art. The design will reference Cherokee basketry in its concept and will provide public education regarding the significance of Cherokee language and history, including the significance of rivercane. In this notable space, downtown visitors can learn about the Cherokee traditions and culture that still thrive today.

The conception of the parklet first began in 2017, when the Center initiated the [Broadway Cultural Gateway Planning Project](#) and subsequent report with its neighbors to transform the block surrounding 67 Broadway Street into a cultural gateway and arts destination to welcome residents and visitors to downtown Asheville. From this project, key recommendations for additional creative placekeeping efforts were put forth including the need for both public art and a parklet. In light of the demands for outdoor space brought on by COVID-19, the Cherokee Basketry Public Art Parklet also meets an even greater need and opportunity for engaging thousands of pedestrians through education about indigenous craft traditions.

4-Co Collaborative (an Asheville-based Landscape Architecture & design firm) collaborated with basket weaver Mary Thompson, an enrolled member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI), and held listening sessions with the board of the Qualla Arts & Crafts Mutual, Inc. to inform the basket-inspired design of the parklet. Of the project, Thompson states, "Working closely with other tribal members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee, 4-Co and the Center for Craft on this project, we have created this meaningful parklet design. This collaborative effort has brought Cherokee artistry and culture to the forefront, to be displayed downtown through modern or contemporary art and design. I am thrilled to have worked with such a dedicated group of individuals."

The Center for Craft received generous support from The Revitalization of Traditional Cherokee Artisan Resources (RTCAR) for the planning of the Cherokee Basketry Public Art Parklet and accompanying exhibition (scheduled for Spring 2021).

Among other significant planning components, the grant from RTCAR made it possible to form a Planning Committee consisting of key members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians to inform the artistic and educational components of the parklet design, including:

- Joshua Adams, Artist and Teacher, Cherokee High School; Enrolled member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

- Dakota Brown, Education Director, Museum of the Cherokee Indian
- Gabe Crowe, Artist; Enrolled member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
- Vicki Cruz, Manager, Qualla Arts and Crafts; Enrolled member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
- Adam Griffith, Project Director, Revitalization of Traditional Cherokee Artisan Resources
- Hope Huskey, Associate Director, Sequoyah Fund; Enrolled member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
- Bo Lossiah, Curriculum and Instruction Supervisor- New Kituwah Academy, Kituwah Preservation and Education Program; Enrolled member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
- Mary Thompson, Artist, Veteran; Enrolled member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

Additionally, the Center plans to engage the Cherokee Speakers Council to support the spoken translation of the educational text panels and the New Kituwah Academy to consult and provide the Cherokee syllabary within the parklet.

The Center for Craft would like to thank all of the Committee members, RTCAR and the Cherokee Preservation Foundation, 4-Co Collaborative, and the many people whose input has made the planning for this project possible: the City of Asheville; the North Carolina Department of Transportation; Qualla Arts & Crafts Mutual, Inc.; and our Broadway Street neighbors.

TJ Holland, Cultural Resources Supervisor EBCI Junaluska Museum and enrolled member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, also served on the Committee until his recent passing. The Center recognizes and honors Holland's immeasurable contributions to the EBCI culture and community through this project.

Please stay tuned for more information about the prototype, updated renderings, and progress of the Cherokee basketry public art parklet.

This project is supported in part by the Cherokee Preservation Foundation.



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ABOUT CENTER FOR CRAFT Founded in 1996, the Center for Craft is the leading organization in the United States identifying and convening craft makers, curators, and researchers, and matching them with resources, tools, and networks to advance their careers. Over the years, the Center has become a vital community resource, serving thousands of visitors annually. As a national 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the field of craft, the Center administers more than \$300,000 in grants to those working in the craft field. For more information on all grants administered by Center for Craft, click [here. www.centerforcraft.org](http://www.centerforcraft.org)