FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
CONTACT: Stephanie Moore, Executive Director
828-785-1357 x 106 | press@centerforcraft.org

ASHEVILLE, NC (September 21, 2022) – On Saturday, October 15th between 1-4pm, the Center for Craft invites the community to celebrate ŠMy The Basket, a collaborative public art installation and parklet that centers indigenous voices in the midst of downtown Asheville. The day will include interactive family-friendly activities inside and outside of the Center for Craft, live craft demonstrations by Cultural Specialists from the Museum of the Cherokee Indian, music, a Cherokee Fry Bread Pop Up and more.

The installation marks a trading route on the ancestral land of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI), who were forcibly displaced from the area in the 1830s. It also symbolizes the living cultural legacy of the Cherokee and their rich contributions to craft.

Designed by ŠMy Mary Welch Thompson, consulting artist and EBCI basket maker, in conjunction with Asheville-based Osgood Landscape Architecture, local women-owned metal artists, Iron Maiden Studios, as well as local builders Ironwood Studios, and a committee of EBCI educators, ŠMy The Basket will welcome locals and visitors with a symbol that emblematizes Cherokee history and contemporary cultural expression. Its chevron design, an abstraction of the pattern known to some as “Falling Water” or “Flowing Water,” is cut from the steel decking. It also has a practical purpose: to function as a drain for rain, snow, and ice. ŠMy The Basket references Cherokee basket making in its colors, structure, and materials, including white oak and references to walnut, and bloodroot, plants essential to basket makers who have harvested and processed their own wood and dyes for centuries to weave intricate baskets.

“It has been an honor and pleasure to work with the artist and design team on this art installation,” shares Thompson. “In my lifetime I have witnessed our cultural life skills evolve into an art form, and that art has transformed from traditional to contemporary. For me, the significance of this art installation is the fact that it is on a prime parcel of land in the history of the Cherokees. I believe my ancestors would have appreciated resting on this parklet bench, and they probably appreciated the mossy log they rested on as they journeyed this trade route many years ago."

A mural inspired by a rivercane mat woven by Thompson will be on display alongside the installation during the celebration.
“Our research into the history of this area led to the realization that Broadway is a historic Cherokee trading route,” says Center for Craft’s Executive Director, Stephanie Moore. “Through *WMG The Basket*, this team is using public art to signify civic values, particularly along a route that so many visitors and locals take when coming to downtown Asheville. It is our desire that, through recognizing and holding space for Cherokee in a prominent location, we will see neighbors, coworkers, and local business owners have a place to take a lunch break or have an outdoor coffee date alongside visitors learning about the continued Cherokee presence in the region.”

For the Center for Craft and its supporters, *WMG The Basket* is also, as Moore puts it, “a living Land Acknowledgement, rather than a performative statement that is vacant of action. It centers the voices and power of EBCI and raises awareness about the continued presence and importance of Cherokee in this region.”

EBCI Principal Chief Richard Sneed notes that “the significance of the parklet cannot be overstated. This project demonstrates the ability of art and artisans to educate the public accurately and appropriately about the ancient history of the land and people who have resided here from time immemorial. I appreciate that the parklet is about restoration and preservation of our culture, art, and our artisans for a community that may have no idea about the Cherokee people who lived and worked in To-Ki-Ya-Sdi (Asheville) for generations prior to European contact.”

The origins of the project are in the Broadway Cultural Gateway, an ongoing initiative begun five years ago to make the northern entrance into historic downtown Asheville, at the intersection of Broadway and Woodfin St., an arts destination, with the Center for Craft as an anchor. *WMG The Basket* is one significant piece in a creative place-keeping visioning process that will enliven the area through wayfinding signage and public art.

Read more about *WMG The Basket* [here](#) and register for the Opening Celebration [here](#).

# # #

**ABOUT CENTER FOR CRAFT** The Center for Craft is a 501(c)3 nonprofit advancing the field of craft through awarding grants, offering exhibitions and public programs, building strategic community and national partnerships, and spearheading initiatives in the United States. Founded in 1996, the Center is widely acknowledged as one of the most influential national organizations working in the craft field today. For more information, visit [www.centerforcraft.org](http://www.centerforcraft.org).