

Mountain Shadow Association Family Healing Center Design Concept September 2019



When you walk into this place for healing young families, picture this:

A shaken family, referred to the Family Healing Center through the Lodge Grass Restorative Justice Program or the local courts, walks through the wide double doors at the front in the center of the building open into a room full of activity. Teachers are talking and playing with children alongside their parents. A grandparent is reading a story to a small group of children sitting in the laps of their parents. It is happy and peaceful. There are places for children to find calm and to feel safe. There are garden boxes on wheels that the children can move about the room. They place them along the inside wall of the room where high windows look through the atrium out into the courtyard. Along one side a few parents are studying for college courses or to get their GEDs.

People move about the courtyard space with ease and purpose tending to the space and to their minds, hearts, and bodies in small groups or as pairs. Farther out in the field, horses are being trained by a team of young people and on the other side men are enthusiastically working together to bring up the frame of a new home. There is a feeling in the atmosphere that says that everything is working smoothly, orchestrated with kindness as many parts become one healthy village. There is no chaos or drama, only respect, patience, and a quite sense of responsibility and pride.

The new family can immediately sense this place holds love, purpose, belonging, and support.

In the evening the room is filled with tables where families sit around dinner tables. Some are helping in the kitchen and others are serving at the tables. Everyone works together until dinner has been eaten and everything is cleaned. Then the children head to bed and parents and grandparents and members of the community sit drinking coffee, talking in small groups, and working on projects.

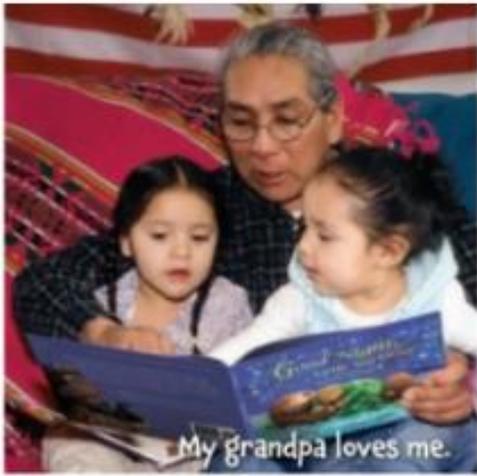


In the kitchen of the facility meals are prepared for the multigenerational classroom participants. Bison, elk, and deer come out the freezer and fresh vegetables are chosen from the garden or greenhouses. A chef is teaching those in the kitchen culinary skills they will use in preparing high-class meals of indigenous foods for the small restaurant. Patrons can book the restaurant for meetings or dinners, but it is not open every night. The restaurant though small, is sharp and clean and full of uniquely Crow designs. It is a point of pride for those preparing foods that represent their rich heritage of strength and health. Only the best foods are served here – to paying guests and to the families who live and work here. Good nutrition flows naturally from the products prepared because they are grown, harvested, and made in ways that respect the plants, animals, and land they come from. People who eat here know reverence for their food and it heals them.



Next to the restaurant is a small gift shop where products made at the center are sold. Each artist sets their own price for the things they create. When products are purchased, artists put 10% of the profit back into the center. There are all different kinds of products and they represent the very best in high quality craftsmanship. Some products and businesses are also a part of the Lodge Grass Business Incubator where residents will learn to manage their small business, market their products, save for an eventual move to Main Street, and grow business as a legacy for family and community.

Moving back to the right of the classroom, there is an elder's residence. Here elders take one-year turns being the resident grandparent(s). Their job is just to be present, to share wisdom and laughter with children and their parents when they can, and to find joy in their important role.



Above the multigenerational classroom, on the second floor, children's rooms are placed between two care-taker residences. There is a room for boys and a room for girls. In each room, each child has a sleeping area that is their own small space. It is cozy and safe. There is a large walk-in closet in each room where each child has a designated space for their clothing and their laundry. They make this space their own and it belongs to them while they are here. The caregiver's residences are placed on either end of the children's space so that the center parents can take turns. Two stable families share the job of caring for up to 12 children, one week on, one week off. During the first three weeks of each year, both families care for the children together while they are getting settled and becoming comfortable with their caregivers.



Across the courtyard there are three parent residences. The small homes these parents live in will allow them to care for just the basic tasks of homemaking while they begin the road to healing and recovery. For a time, parents will be able to just work on themselves and their marriages. When they reach certain milestones, their children will join them, sleeping in the lofts of these small homes. They'll be able to gradually learn the routine of caring for a family and keeping a home they are proud of. These homes replicate the center portion of a home men can build for their families as part of the men's counseling-through-work program. Utilizing the 200 log allotment available to Crow tribal members and the sawmill at the center, men can begin building the central portion of their own home. At the end of their year in the program, they can have a small home that has been designed to grow. This home design has been created so that two wings can be built onto the center home to eventually create a five-bedroom home. Using the skills they have gained at the center, fathers will be able to build their families homes.



LODGE GRASS SMALL HOME - FLOOR PLAN

FRONT ELEVATION - SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"

AREA = 1,564 SQUARE FEET TOTAL

Each of the three small homes is connected by a greenhouse. The connecting greenhouses form a natural back boundary for the village grounds. Families can tend their plants together and begin to create family meals from the ingredients they have grown themselves.

At the far right of the property there are sheds and corrals for therapeutic animal care. Both children and their parents can heal as they care for horses, alpaca, rabbits, and other animals.

There is a prayer loop walking trail that skirts the property and people walk quietly finding calm in the natural environment. As they walk, they pass a small clear area where a sweat lodge has been built. It is clean and carefully tended.

Around the courtyard there are gardens. Children, parents, and community members work together while they talk and learn.



At the very center of the courtyard there is an arbor and a fire pit for times of ceremony and times of gathering, for prayer, and laughter, and sharing life experiences.



On the left side of the circle there is a place called The Healing Rooms. This small building is for one-on-one, couples, or family counseling and basic medical and dental services. It may also have one room with space for two to four dialysis units.

All of these parts are intended to create a healthy village ecosystem where families can learn to appreciate each other, find value and purpose, and be supported in their healing. Professional staff like teachers and counselors will keep things running smoothly from day to day and health providers will come to the center to provide services families may need like doctor's visits, dental care, and outpatient treatment.

Every aspect of the buildings in this village will look like it could easily be lost in the natural environment. It will fit into its surroundings organically and will not have any parts that look or feel industrial or residential. Inside and out, its form is both innovative and ancestrally familiar, like you've known this place your whole life. Its circular layout is intended to create an atmosphere of support and safety. It is located just down the hill from the school, enabling staff and parents to engage with the school in supporting a trauma informed environment for healing children. At the end of the day, they will know where home is.

