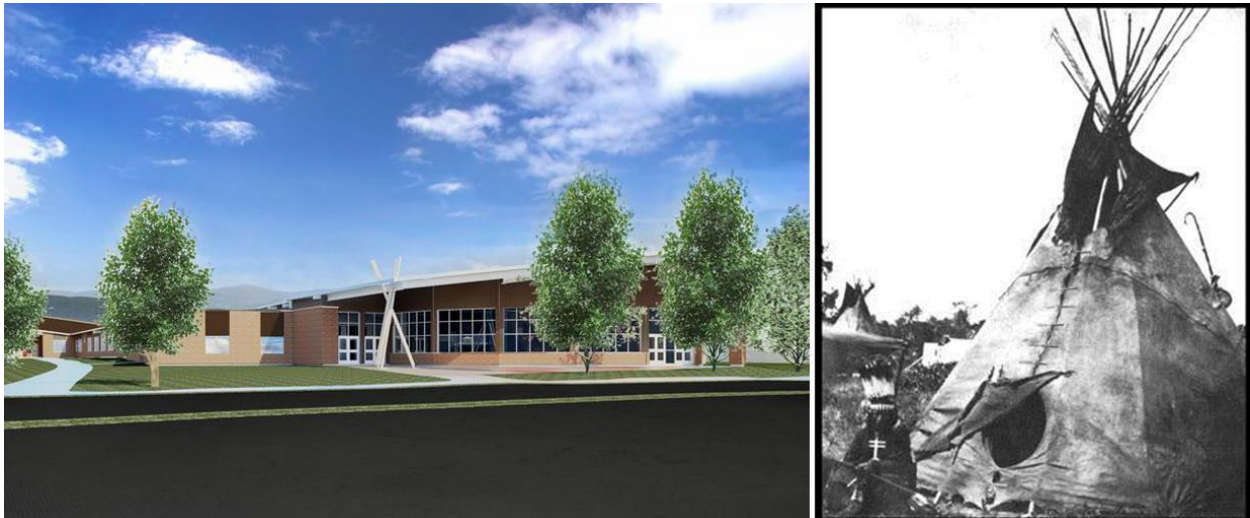


Ward + Blake Architects Ft. Washakie School Design Honors Cultural Heritage

December 7, 2015

\$54 million K-12 campus designed with Fanning/Howey Associates breaks ground



A Ward + Blake Architects rendering (left) of the entry to Fort Washakie, Wyo., school that recently broke ground includes entry columns that suggest the structure of a Shoshone teepee, as reflected in the historical photo (right).

Jackson Hole, Wyo. – Dec. 4, 2015 – The teepee is a symbolic presence – one of a number of tribal motifs – in the design of a new pre-K through 12th-grade school campus in the town of Fort Washakie, Wyo. The \$54 million project, which broke ground recently, is designed by [Ward + Blake Architects](#) of Jackson Hole in association with veteran school design specialists Fanning/Howey Associates. Fort Washakie, named for Shoshone Chief Washakie, a champion of education, is located on the Wind River Indian Reservation, and the design for the school complex

integrates the community's tribal heritage throughout, from dedicated space for cultural activities through color palette, materials and imagery.

Community engagement played an important role in the design process for the project, which included an early-stage three-day charrette that solicited input from such stakeholders as the Fremont County School District #21 board, tribal elders and community members with knowledge of local history. Historically, early reservation schools discouraged, even punished, Native American children embracing their culture, including – at the first Fort Washakie school – making them wear uniforms.

“The current school is very connected to its culture, incorporating the language and traditions,” says Ken Mahood, Ward + Blake project manager. “Preserving their cultural heritage through the architecture of the new school – as well as through the education they receive there – was a very important goal.”

In response to that goal, the 190,000-square-foot elementary and high school complex, which will provide classroom, recreational, and extracurricular space for nearly 800 students in two buildings, includes a Shoshone language classroom and a Shoshone dance studio. In addition, “they significantly increased the size of the gym for basketball and community events,” says Mahood.

“We have worked to create conceptual connections to the natural environment through the building,” he says, referring to the architectural symbiosis with the contextual landscape that Ward + Blake Architects is known for, both in its [residential design](#) and in its other educational projects, which include the award-winning LEED Gold-certified [The Ranch Childcare Center](#) – designed in collaboration with D.W. Arthur and Associates – and the recently completed remodel of remote [Kelly Elementary School](#) on the edge of Grand Teton National Park.

One such environmental connection for the Fort Washakie school is masonry walls that metaphorically mimic area slot canyons, as well as floor tiles set in a way that suggests local rivers. “But the bigger mission is connecting to the cultural icons and symbols that are important,” explains Mahood.

A Shoshone rose – celebrating the wild mountain roses that provided an early food source and became a treasured motif – is worked into the lobby

floor tile, and historical photographs of Chief Washakie grace the walls. The interior palette reflects symbolic tribal associations with various colors, and classrooms will be named with cultural resonance. As a nod to the school's own history, a river rock fireplace built in the early 1900s has been saved from the original school building. As for the iconic teepee symbol, the imagery is reflected both in the slanted steel columns at the school's main entrances and in larger circular elements within the architectural plan that symbolize the importance of the circle in tribal culture, including the shape of the main lobby and round skylights.

Ward + Blake Architects was built on a distinctive vision: to be provocative in thought, flexible in nature and disciplined in execution. Since 1996, the firm has earned recognition for architecture that is sensitive to its environment and successfully integrated with its surroundings, including being named 2013 Firm of the Year by the six-state AIA Western Mountain Region. Ward + Blake creates buildings that are tactile, modern, bioclimatically responsible, honestly expressed, technologically sound and artfully crafted. A recent monograph, [***In the Shadows of the Tetons: Selected Works of Ward + Blake Architects***](#), provides an overview of the firm's award-winning work. For additional information, visit Ward + Blake online at www.wardblakearchitects.com or call 307.733.6867.

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