

# PRESS RELEASE

## CADDO NATION BREAKS GROUND ON A NEW CHILD CARE CENTER—AND MUCH MORE



HINTON, Okla.—When the Caddo Nation of Oklahoma conducts a ceremony on the morning of July 10 at 10:00AM to mark the beginning of construction of a new child care center, it will be breaking ground on much more than a new building.

The new child care center represents just one aspect of the federally recognized tribe’s emergence from the pandemic-era. The new child care center will be a state-of-the-art facility and the first project in Oklahoma to be designed by the architectural firm MASS Design Group. MASS Design—known for its projects around the globe, including in developing countries—approaches architectural design as a means for supporting and providing new possibilities for communities.

Moreover, the Caddo child care center will be constructed by the Nation’s new and wholly owned construction enterprise, Arrowood Kakinah Enterprise. Arrowood, although only recently formed, already has a number of projects underway and planned across Caddo County, Oklahoma.

Bobby Gonzalez, the Caddo Nation’s Chairman, said the new child care facility is just one product of the efforts by the tribe’s leadership over the last two years to rebuild its community from the ruins of the pandemic, and to do so in new ways.

“Our tribe was devastated by the pandemic,” Gonzalez said. “Our tribal office was closed in 2020, we had many deaths, including among our valuable and irreplaceable elders. The situation looked dire. But it looks exactly the opposite now.”

Since 2021, the Caddo Nation has rebuilt its administrative staff, and it has launched new economic development entities, including the Caddo Nation Economic Development Authority (CNEDA), which is the parent of Arrowood. The tribe has been acquiring businesses, and it is rapidly creating new jobs.

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“Our tribal leadership just two years ago was looking at a very bleak situation, but we saw opportunities,” Gonzalez said. “We did not have much to work with in the way of resources, so our approach was to try to develop smart strategies and to be efficient.”

“Our tribe has been here before. In 1859, we were run out of Texas essentially at gun point, and the government settled us on this new homeland. We did not have anything then, but we survived. I believe we are doing what our ancestors did then—to work hard and find a way.”

The new child care center will be tangible evidence of the Caddo initiatives so far. It is located on almost 80 acres of land northwest of Hinton, Oklahoma, which includes a small lake and woodlands. MASS Design presented the tribe with a concept that integrates the surroundings with planned trails and outdoor playground areas. The new facility will include classrooms, a cultural hub, a cafeteria, and an indoor-outdoor aquatic center. The center incorporates a number of energy efficient design elements.

In planning the center, MASS Design has also taken into consideration many aspects of Caddo culture, as well as factors such as weather conditions in western Oklahoma and their impact on the use of the facility.

“We could have obtained an architectural design from a lot of good firms, but MASS Design has considered our overall community and culture, our needs, and broader use of the site,” Gonzalez said.

In 2021, The American Institute of Architects honored MASS Design Group with the 2022 AIA Architecture Firm Award. In 2020, MASS was named the Architecture Innovator of the Year by the Wall Street Journal, for its work in the area of healthcare and its commitment to architecture as a medium for healing. In 2019, Architect Magazine ranked MASS fourth in its list of Top 50 Firms in Design, and in 2017, MASS was awarded the National Design Award in Architecture, given each year by the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum. The principal architect for the project is Joseph Kunkel, who works from MASS Design’s Santa Fe office.

Gonzalez said the child care center is just the beginning. “We have a number of other projects in line that we believe will raise the Caddo Nation, and that will also benefit our broader community in Caddo County. This is an exciting time for our tribe and for Caddo County.”

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