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Indigenous Design and Planning Institute Builds Capacity Statewide, Beyond

Carolyn Gonzales

The Indigenous Design and Planning Institute, iD+Pi, at the University of New Mexico, was created to educate and inform policy leaders, students, professionals and communities within and outside the university about culturally appropriate design and planning practices.

Community and Regional Planning Distinguished Professor Ted Jojola, from Isleta Pueblo, directs the program. In the short time since iD+Pi was established, Jojola has received many requests to aid indigenous communities in New Mexico and the surrounding areas.

The institute is in the end stages of providing design assistance for Ysleta del Sur in El Paso, Texas. The tribe lost many of its traditional tribal lands, especially in its historic housing district because many tribal members took advantage of US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) housing, not realizing they were replacing traditional tribal assets. The tribe bought properties throughout El Paso when it had casino money. The state of Texas closed the casino, but they remained undaunted when it came to preserving their culture. Jojola, and his planning colleagues, Moises Gonzales, Tim Imeokparia and their students, developed a cultural corridor plan. It included elements

like signage and design standards used to give visitors a sense of awareness they have entered tribal lands.

Requests from other communities in Nambé, Tohatchi, Cochiti and Taos, among others, have rolled in. Jojola is busy preparing grant applications so as to advance their assistance. One, to the Graham Foundation, will help them to reproduce color photos for inclusion in a book on contemporary indigenous architecture that will be published by the UNM Press. Another went out to the Fetzer Foundation, to support work in design and environmental justice with the Red Water Pond Road community near Church Rock, NM.

Jojola said that final working details are in place to begin creating a community master plan for the town of Crownpoint. "We are looking at the issues holistically," he said, adding that they'd like to establish a field site presence at the Crownpoint Institute of Technology, creating a place where iD+Pi can work on the ground with their faculty, students and citizens, thereby enabling local planning capacity.

Cochiti wants a plan to preserve its historic plaza. For Cochiti, the students in Jojola's class on Human Settlement will begin the effort by exploring its historic context, reviewing archival materials and looking for historic photos of the plaza.

Similarly, "Nambe wants revitalization of its historic plaza in a manner that addresses the major contemporary issues that have been wrought by social and environmental change," Jojola said. "That will result in a summer field studio."

Taos Pueblo is currently undertaking a community-driven comprehensive plan," he said. Taos has withstood the test of time, but it is challenged by controlling new growth and development outside its historic village. iD+Pi has already done a Planning 101 session for the pueblo's planning committee and hopes

to be involved in the community meetings that will be held to inform the process.

Jojola and another team is preparing a proposal to HUD about the role of traditional adobe as a sustainable housing material.

“We have six contracts and seven in queue. Because demand has been so great, we need to build more internal capacity,” Jojola said, noting that hiring a student program manager position to assist Amanda Montoya, iD+Pi program specialist, would be next. “We have the need to hire students for each project,” he said. “That really adds to our workload.” That position will also be strategic to recruiting new native students interested in tribal community design and planning.

With the Institute of American Indian Arts, iD+Pi is helping develop the first-ever museum exhibit of contemporary indigenous architecture. It is slated for the fall of 2014 at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center. “We partnered with museum studies to assist with the conceptual elements of the exhibit,” he said, noting that a major theme will be “architecture is storytelling.” The storytelling will also be digitized with the launching of iD+Pi’s new website. The website entails indigenous news, planning and architecture, and shares the voices of all those who are affiliated with iD+Pi and its projects.

The School of Architecture and Planning’s iD+Pi program has longer arms. “We are also collaborating with the Latin American & Iberian Institute and the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay, on a winter field school on Inca architecture in Ecuador,” Jojola said.

And in capacity building, the school hired Dr. Laura Harjo, Muscogee (Creek), University of Southern California geography graduate, as a visiting professor. She joins the faculty permanently in the fall. Her areas of expertise are geographic information systems (GIS) and indigenous planning. “This marks UNM as the only

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tier 1 university with two native faculty in its planning program," Jojola said.

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[1](#)



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