



Indigenous Learning Space

Western University

DESIGN TEAM

Wanda Dalla Costa Architect

Design Leads

Wanda Dalla Costa
Claudio Vekstein

Design Assistants

Tierra Miller
Dolores Cremonini
Rocky Hanish

Project Lead

Scott Robinson



'ALL OUR RELATIONS'

Western University is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak and Attawandaron peoples, who have longstanding relationships to the land and region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. The local First Nation communities of this area include Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation.





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1 INTRODUCTION

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Drawing inspiration from the Anishnawbe concept, 'All Our Relations', a teaching that reminds human beings that we are inextricably interconnected and interdependent with each other and all nature, Western will create an innovation and ground-breaking Indigenous Learning Space. This Space strives to support Indigenous student and community engagement and advance Indigenous ways of knowing and Indigenous pedagogies at Western University.

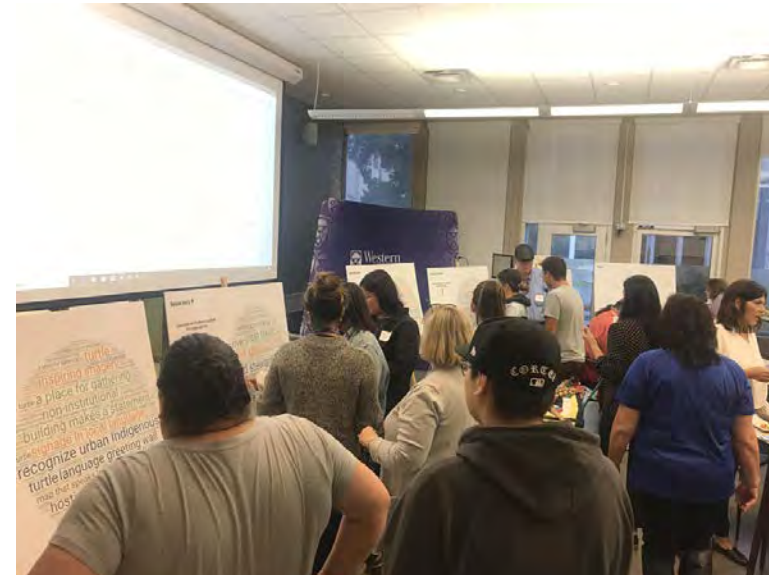
This Space will strive to act as:

- A homeplace for Indigenous students and Indigenous programming on campus.
- A touchstone for Indigenous peoples and communities to engage with Western through ongoing community engagement and knowledge mobilization activities.
- A place of connectivity among people at Western who share a common interest in advancing Indigenization, decolonization, and reconciliation fostering a sense of community across diversity.
- A venue that supports and advances Indigenous ways of knowing and Indigenous pedagogies across disciplines through formal and informal learning at Western.

This specific space embodies a distinctive circular structure with three levels of indoor space including, a ground/ main floor open concept for gathering area, a second level mezzanine area; and a lower level with a space to accommodate teaching/ learning spaces and offices. The proposed location will allow for a relocation of the University's Indigenous Food and Medicinal Garden and the creation of an outdoor classroom with ceremonial space.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

1. Sept 10, 2019 kick off meeting
2. Sept 20-25, 2019 Focus group / telephone calls (5)
3. Oct 3, 2019 engagement at W.U. (refer to next page for details)
4. Oct 18, 2019 cultural advisory meeting (call)
5. Review:
 1. July 22, 2019 Indigenous Initiative minutes
 2. Sept 19, 2019 Indigenous Initiative minutes
 3. Paper: "Some Time in a Munsee Village in Lenapehoking in 1700" by Mark Peters
Dec 14, 2018 Western University Indigenous Space Project Report + Appendix (7 focus groups with 52 participants between September and December 2018; 239 survey responses of which 52 or 21.8% were indigenous)
 4. Three Generations
 5. Deshkan Ziibiing Anishinaabe Aki Chi-Inaakonigewin
 6. Oneida of The Thames Peace Party, Maintaining the Peace to the Present Oneida of the Thames, Early Settlement Years (1840-1900)



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

September 20, 2019

Focus Group Dialogue

Multiple group dialogues were conducted with students and community members.

October 10, 2019

Engagement Session

Exercise 1

Dot Prioritization

Words and phrases taken from telephone focus groups (by Dalla Costa) were used as the initial driver set. Groups reviewed five drivers, plus one 'other' board, adding their three dots to the driver or concept which they felt was most important.

Exercise 2

Brainstorm

Groups generated ideas of how the drivers could be integrated into the design, using fast paced dialogue, without stopping for discussion, evaluation, judgment or lengthy description. Ideas were recorded by one of the participants on a large sticky pad and then shared back to the larger group.

Exercise 3

Visual Preference Survey

Participants viewed and evaluated a series of images using sticky notes to share which images they liked (or didn't) and why.



2 DESIGN DRIVERS

WELCOMING + INCLUSIVE

Higher education environments are a vital part of a cultural resilience strategy. The intent with the design of the new Indigenous Learning Center is to increase Indigenous students' success, including making students feel welcome. Greeting the students is an Indigenous Language Welcome Wall, containing 62 Indigenous greetings from across Canada, along with a living plant wall. Towards inclusivity, the building offers a two-part strategy. It aims to honour the original territorial community, while recognizing the diversity of our communities across Canada. Visitors will find local as well as national references, all of which were derived from the engagement process (associations listed below).

- a. Language Greeting wall
- b. Natural Materials, Light and Plants
- c. Warm and colourful Interiors
- d. Indigenous associations: snowshoes, lacrosse, longhouse, Métis sash, circles, turtle, texture and drum.
- e. Indigenous artwork

“language lab”

“signage”

“greeting wall”

“syllabics”

“aunties cabin”

“casual”

“Inviting”

“warm”

“non-institutional”

“comfortable seating”



WELCOMING + INCLUSIVE



INDIGENOUS EPISTEMOLOGY + PEDAGOGY

Indigenous learning spaces are on the rise. Research indicates that Indigenous learners engage and persist in environments where they feel that their Indigeneity is meaningfully reflected in learning environments (Smith & Varghese, 2016). Many universities are creating Indigenized spaces for all learners, recognizing other ways of knowing and being. Indigenous knowledge comes in multiple forms: contemporary, gained through experience and education; traditional, handed down based on stories and experiences of people through time; empirical, gained through careful observation and practice over time; and revealed, gained through vision, ritual and ceremony (Johnson, et al, 2015). The Indigenous Learning Center at WU creates spaces for all four types of learning.

- a. East Entry
- b. Indigenous Teaching Garden (exterior)
- c. Outdoor Gathering Space (including firepit)
- d. Connection to elements (fire, water, earth, air)
- e. Organic shapes
- f. Connection to astronomy (constellations, solstice, equinox, four directions)
- g. Indoor living plant wall
- h. Indoor water feature
- i. Natural light and views
- j. Community Gathering Space
- k. Ceremony Space
- l. Indigenous Teaching Spaces (non-traditional classrooms)
- m. Smudge friendly

- “Indigenous teaching spaces”
- “experiential/outdoor teaching”
- “gathering spaces”
- “spiritual connection”
- “ceremony”
- “healing/self-care”
- “cooking”
- “safe space, resting, sleeping”



INDIGENOUS EPISTEMOLOGY + PEDAGOGY



INDIGENOUS EXPRESSION

There are many associations that work together to create an Indigenous expression in the new Learning Center. First, upon arrival at the exterior gathering area, visitors will pass the arbour, which aims to connect to familiar shapes, form and textures (turtle, wigwam, snowshoes, lacrosse). A second critical expression is the natural world references. This includes organic shapes, natural materials, increased natural light and biophilic spaces. A third part of the expression is a comfortable, non-institutional space, or as the community expressed “inviting, casual, warm, non-Institutional and comfortable”. Fourth, the engagement revealed a desire for a contemporary expression. Words that were expressed included: “modern, statement/WOW, color, non-stereotypical, and Indigenous looking” Finally, to complete the expression, the design team created a cultural-centric panel system to host the abundance of cultural, historic and language references and teachings. There are two systems. The Welcome Wall Panels host the language greetings, complete with geometric line work inspired by cultural artifacts of the region. The second panel system, or the Turtle Capsules is aimed at hosting art, cultural objects, history, maps, photos and artwork, while providing visual and acoustic privacy for students. The panel systems provide the flexibility to express culture, now and into the future.

- a. Cultural associations (wigwam, snowshoes, lacrosse)
- b. Natural world references (turtle, circle, materials, plant life, light, views, biophilia)
- c. Comfortable + non-institutional
- d. Contemporary Indigenous Expression
- e. Cultural-centric panel system

“history with descriptions”

“inclusive, community learning space”

“previous generations”

“children, Elders, family”

“social connections”

“territory map”

“media room”

“natural materials, natural world references, natural light, organic shapes, openness”

“Natural Lighting (for students in lower level)”

“Native Plants” (inside/outside)

“medicine / healing garden”

“views outside”

“sustainable technology”

“fire” (inside/outside)

“water feature”

“soft surface pathway”

“big glass windows”

“longhouse, teepee”

“lacrosse, snowshoes”

“turtle”

“constellations, astronomy”

“clans”

“IK symbols”

“Métis sash, fabric”



INDIGENOUS EXPRESSION



SOCIO-CULTURAL PROGRAMMING

The Western University Indigenous Learning Center supports multiple activities to support Indigenous learning, that cover emotional, mental, physical and social. There are spaces for connecting with peers and staff, spaces for learning and recharging, but also spaces for reflection, healing and connection with nature. The combined functions support a more holistic notion of well-being, normalizing cultural activities alongside learning activities. Students come to learn, but also find space to visit with an Elder, take part in a drum circle, smudge, or take a moment to reflect in the garden. In this regard, we have articulated multiple activities and their possible zones in the facility.

- a. Meet
- b. Study
- c. Learn
- d. Share
- e. Eat
- f. Rest
- g. Gather
- h. Heal
- i. Connect

- “Indigenous teaching spaces”
- “experiential/outdoor teaching”
- “gathering spaces”
- “spiritual connection”
- “ceremony”
- “healing/self-care”
- “cooking”
- “safe space, resting, sleeping”



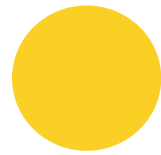
SOCIO-CULTURAL PROGRAMMING





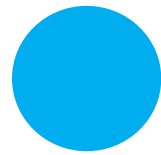
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SCHEMATIC DESIGN



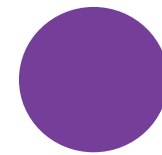
**Design Principle 1:
Welcoming + Inclusive**

- a. Language Greeting wall
- b. Natural Materials, Light and Plants
- c. Warm and colorful Interiors
- d. Indigenous associations: snowshoes, lacrosse, longhouse, Métis sash, circles, turtle, texture and drum.
- e. Indigenous artwork



**Design Principle 3:
Indigenous Epistemology + Pedagogy**

- a. East Entry
- b. Indigenous Teaching Garden (exterior)
- c. Outdoor Gathering Space (including fire pit)
- d. Connection to elements (fire, water, earth, air)
- e. Organic shapes
- f. Connection to astronomy (constellations, solstice, equinox, four directions)
- g. Indoor living plant wall
- h. Indoor water feature
- i. Natural light and views
- j. Community Gathering Space
- k. Ceremony Space
- l. Indigenous Teaching Spaces (non-traditional classrooms)
- m. Smudge friendly



**Design Principle 2:
Socio-Cultural Programming**

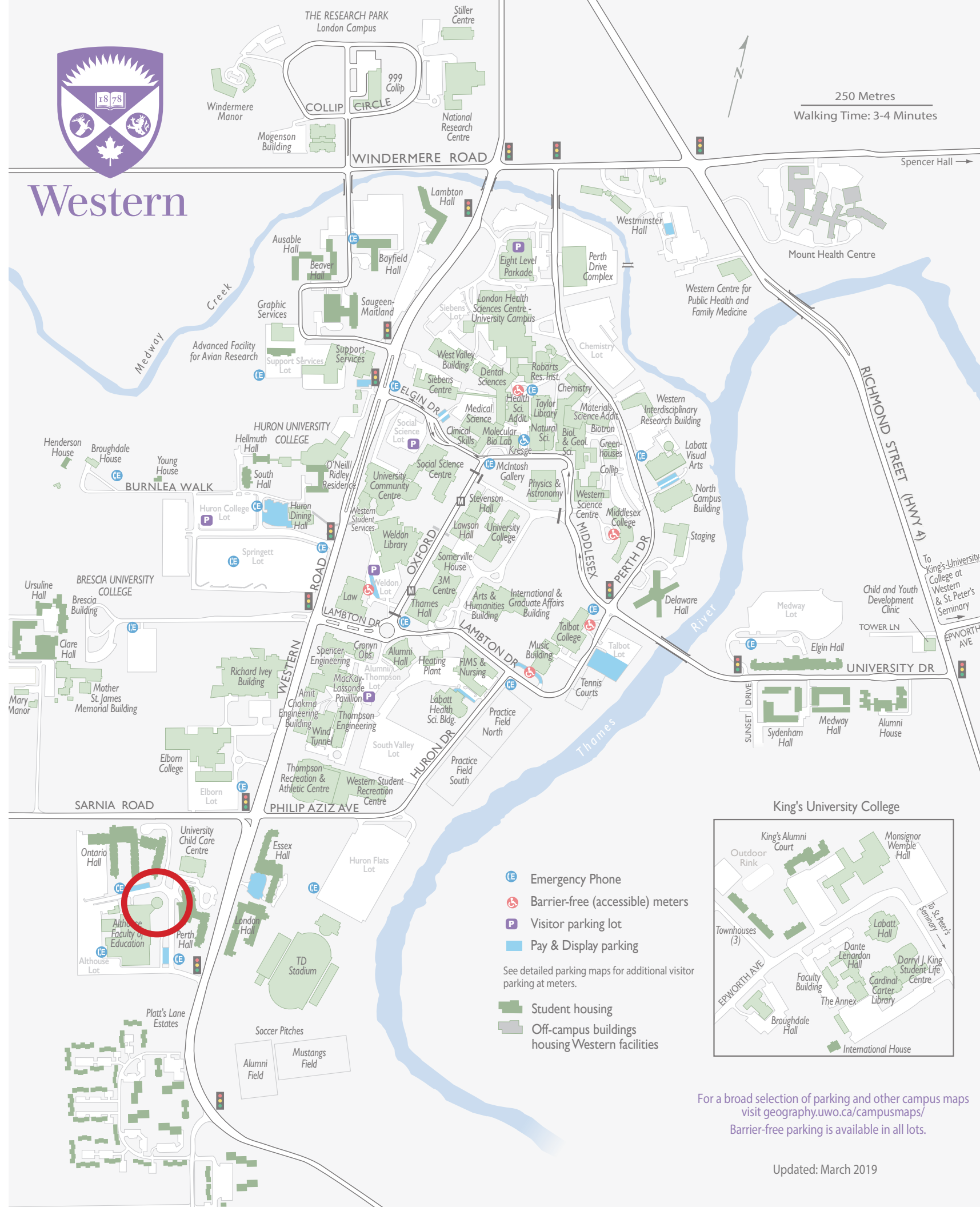
- a. Meet
- b. Study
- c. Learn
- d. Share
- e. Eat
- f. Rest
- g. Gather
- h. Heal
- i. Connect



**Design Principle 4:
Indigenous Expression**

- a. Cultural associations (wigwam, snowshoes, lacrosse)
- b. Natural world references (turtle, circle, materials, plant life, light, views, biophilia)
- c. Comfortable + non-institutional
- d. Contemporary Indigenous Expression
- e. Cultural-centric panel system

Site Context



Site Plan

- 1 East Entry
- 2 Medicine Garden
Gather/ Share/ Learn/ Heal/ Connect
- 3 Outdoor Gathering Arbour
Natural Materials
Cultural Association
Gather/ Share/ Learn/ Heal/ Connect/ Meet
- 4 Fireplace
- 5 Natural Light
- 6 Natural World References



Design Principle 1:
Welcoming + Inclusive

Design Principle 2:
Socio-Cultural Programming

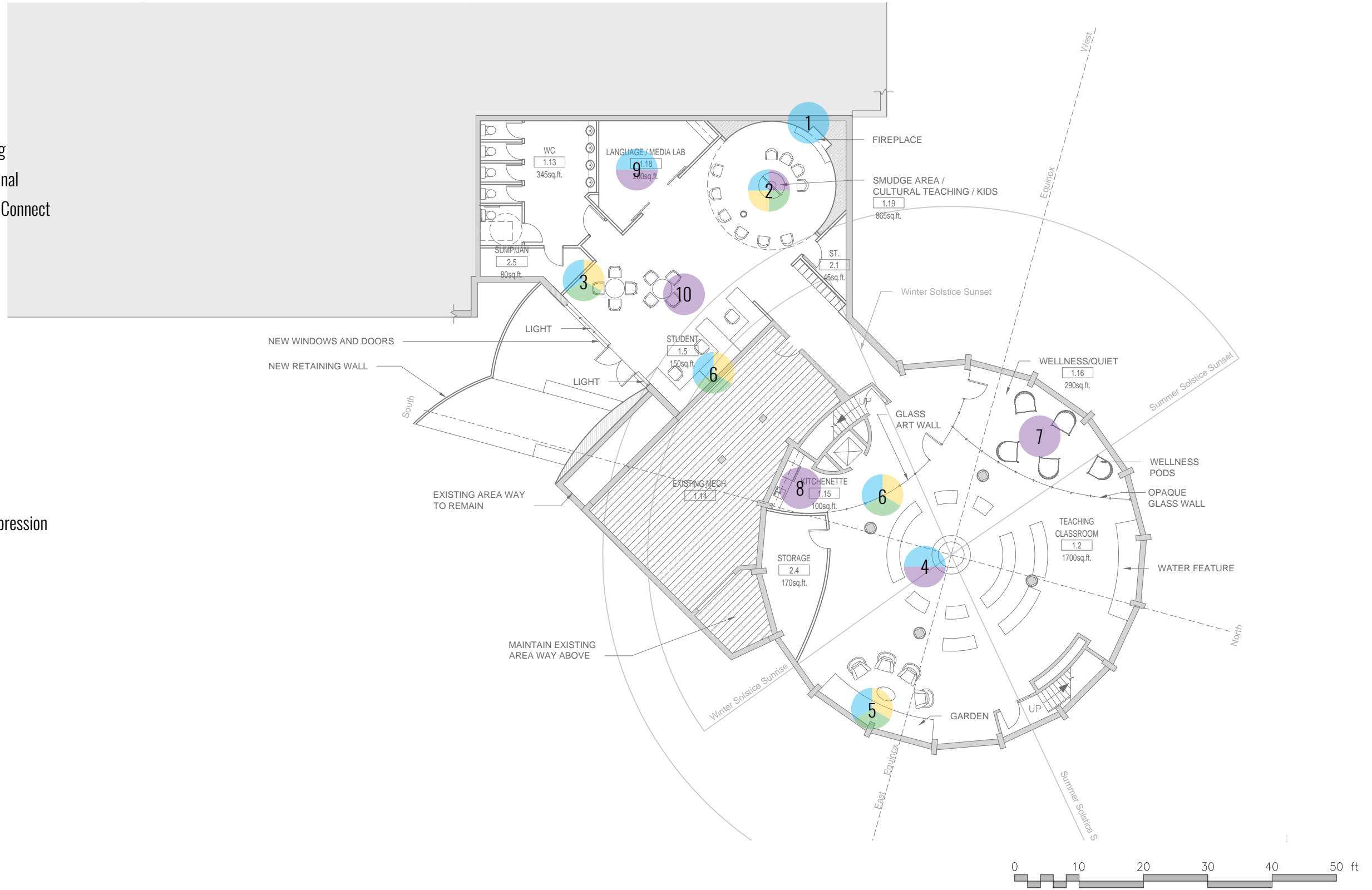
Design Principle 3:
Indigenous Epistemology + Pedagogy

Design Principle 4:
Indigenous Expression



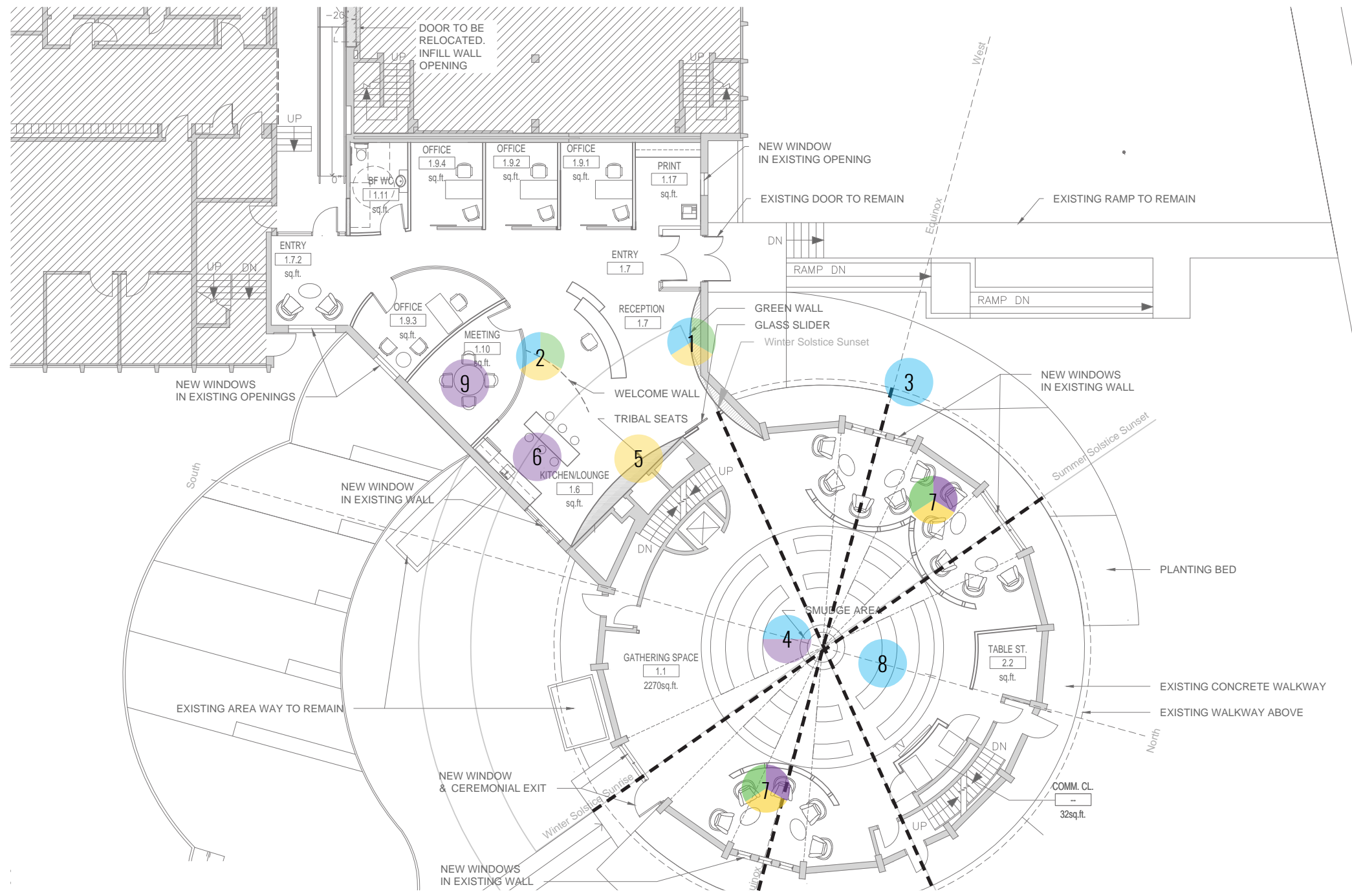
Level 0

- 1 Fireplace
- 2 Cultural Teaching + Smudging
Comfortable + Non- Institutional
Gather/ Share/ Learn/ Heal/ Connect
- 3 Water Feature
- 4 Teaching Space
Gather/ Share/ Learn
- 5 Garden
- 6 Indigenous Art
Contemporary Indigenous Expression
- 7 Rest
- 8 Eat
- 9 Language Media Lab
Share/ Learn
- 10 Study/ Meet




Level 1

- 
Green Wall
 Natural World References
- 
Welcome Wall
 Natural Materials
 Cultural Association (Language)
- 
Solstice + Equinox (refer to dashed)
- 
Gathering Space + Smudging
 Gather/ Share/ Learn
- 
Nation Logo
- 
Eat
- 
Turtle Reference
 Meet/ Study/ Rest
 Indigenous Art + Natural Materials
- 
Constellations (on rotunda ceiling)
- 
Meet/ Connect/ Share/ Learn (Elders)



 Design Principle 1:
Welcoming + Inclusive

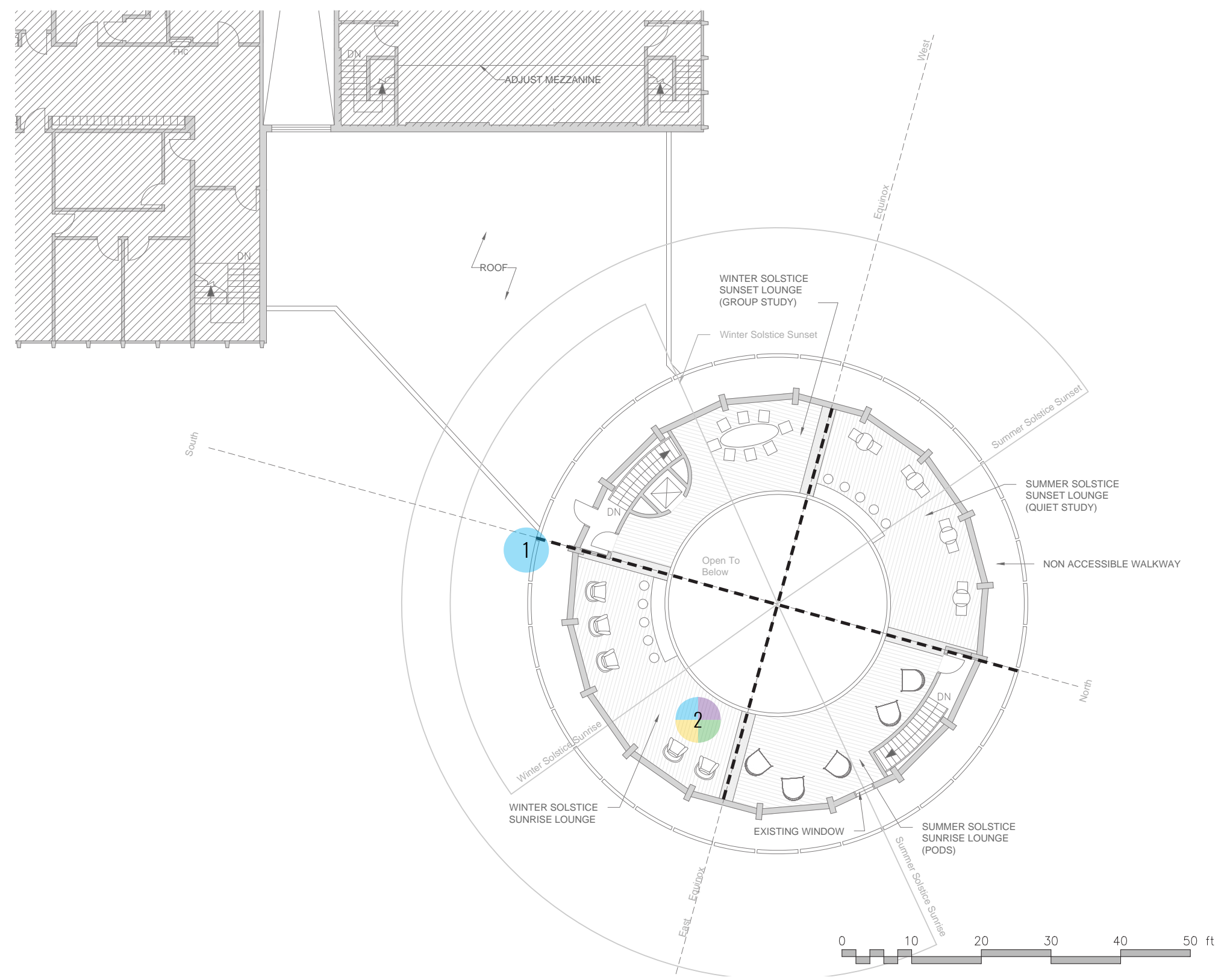
 Design Principle 2:
Socio-Cultural Programming

 Design Principle 3:
Indigenous Epistemology + Pedagogy

 Design Principle 4:
Indigenous Expression

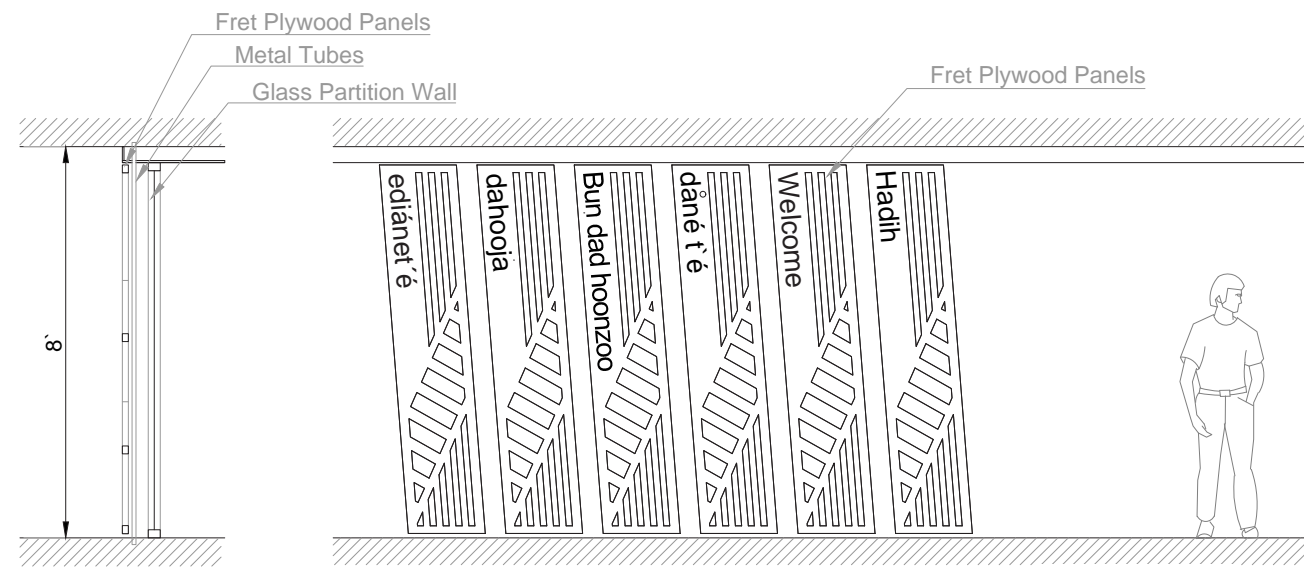
Level 2

- 1 Four Directions (refer to dashed)
- 2 Solstice Lounges
Meet/ Study/ Rest

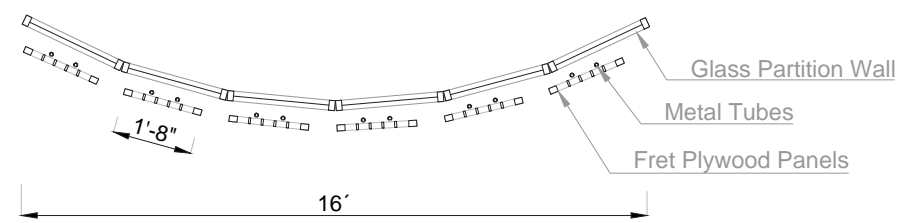


Interior Screen Panels

Welcome Wall Panels

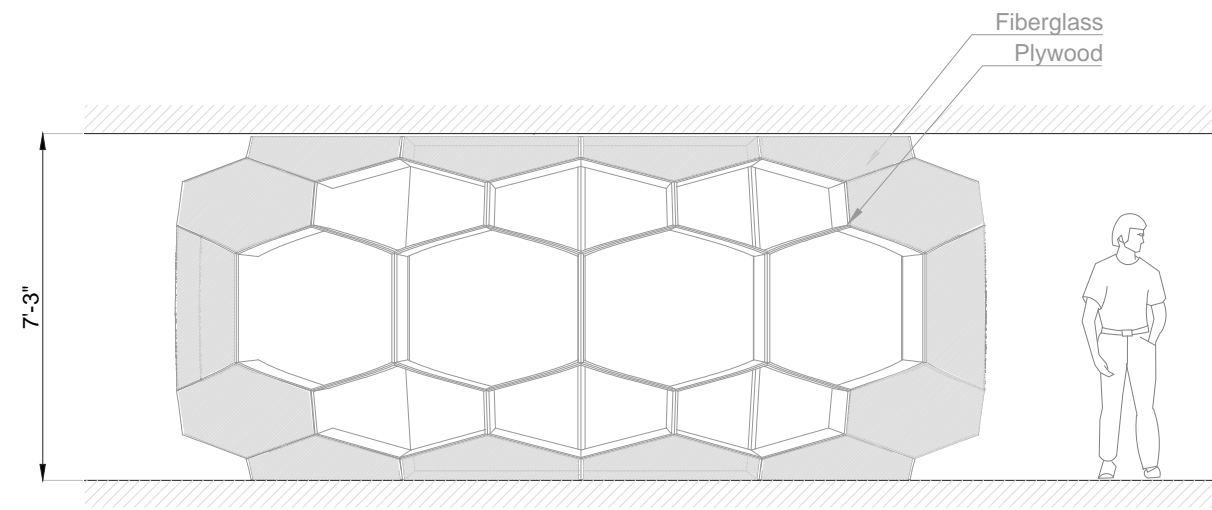


Elevation

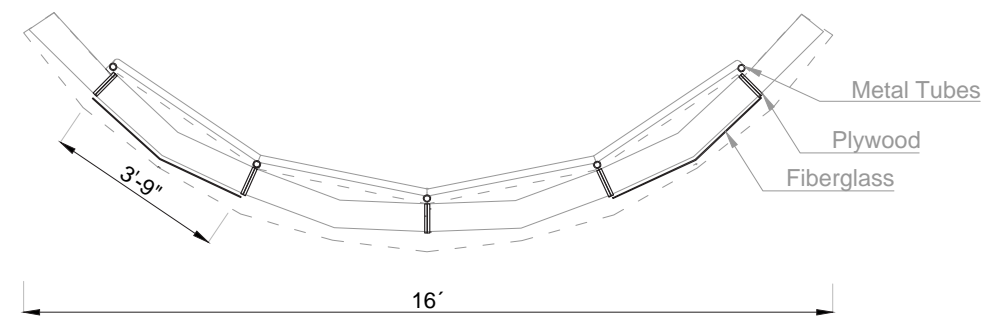


Floor Plan

Concentration Areas: Turtle Capsules Art Exhibition



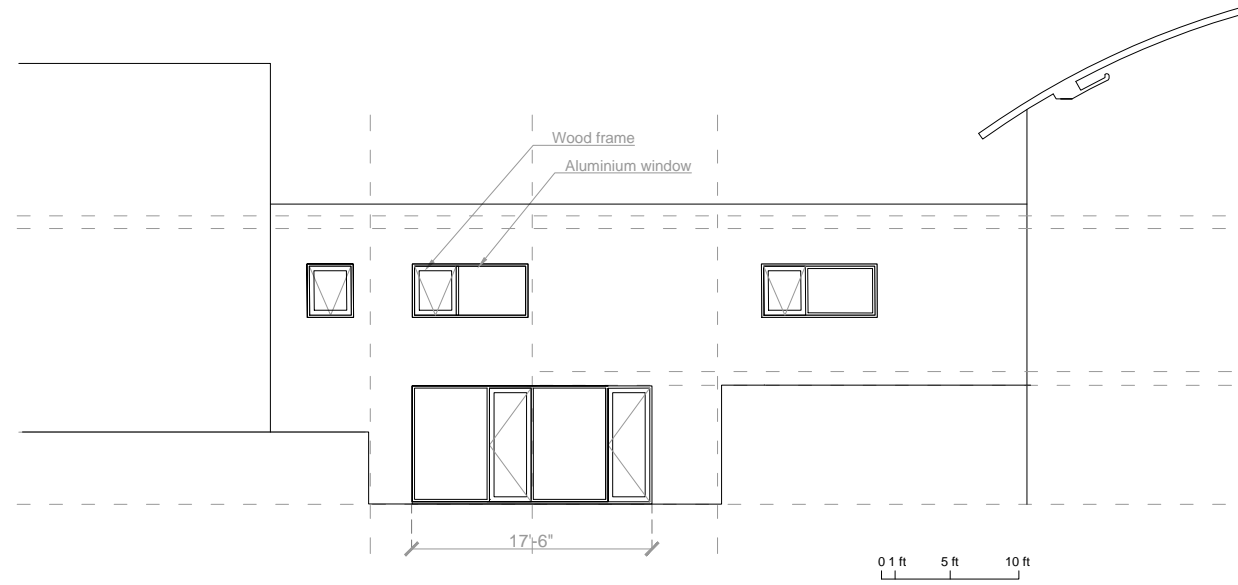
Elevation



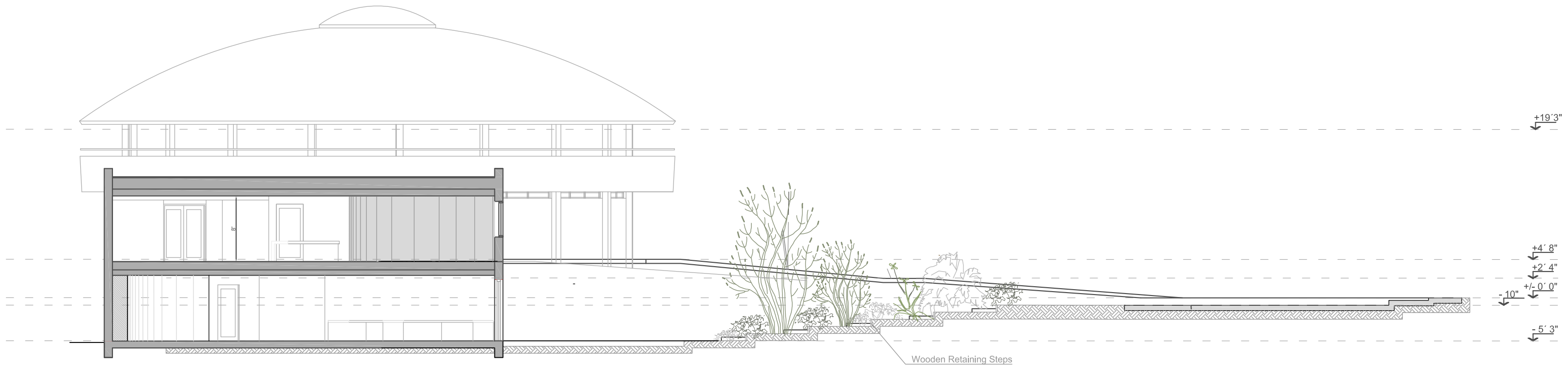
Floor Plan



Outdoor Teaching Garden

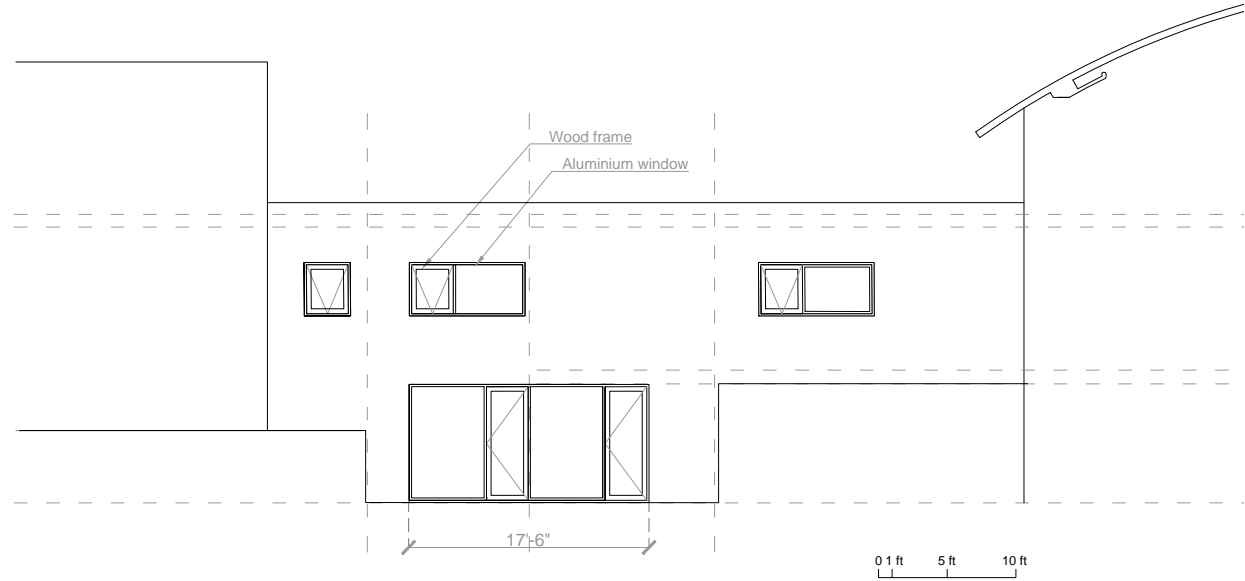


Elevation

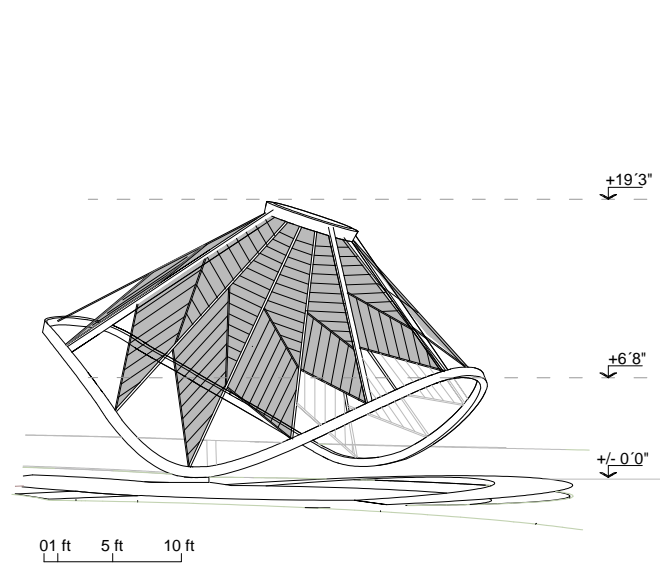


Garden Section

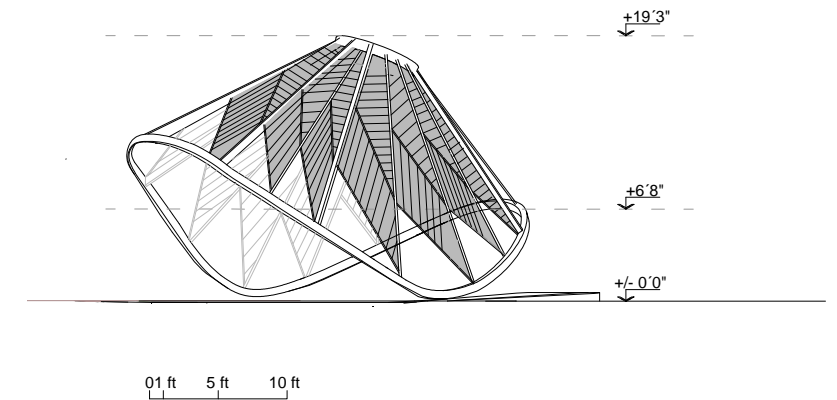
Outdoor Teaching Garden + Gathering Arbour



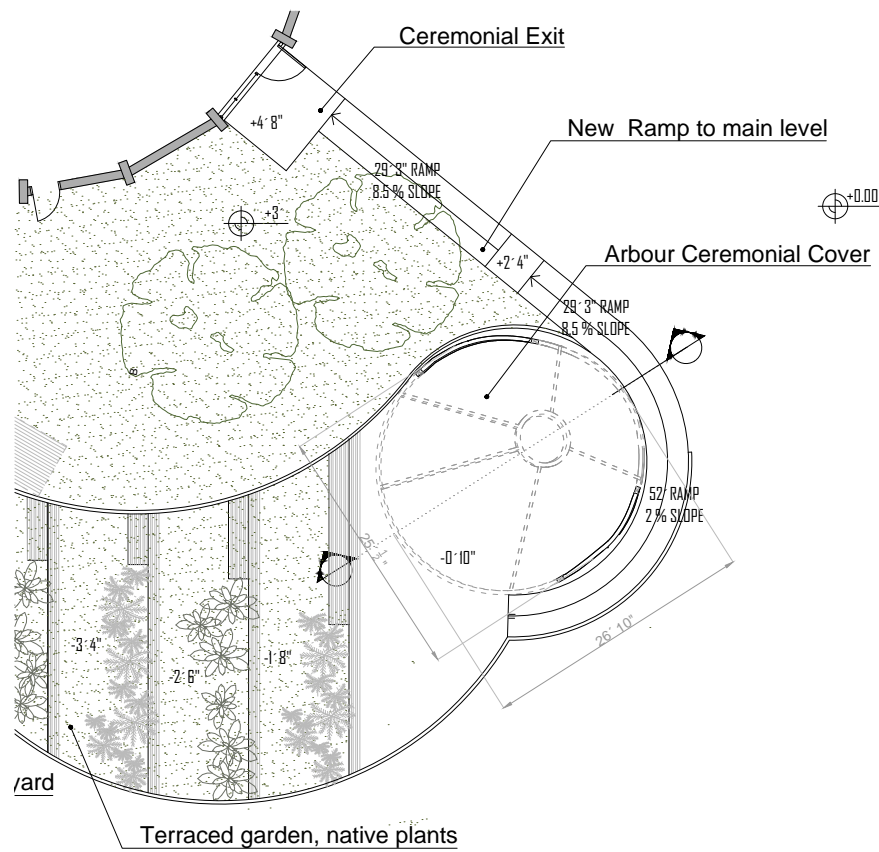
Elevation



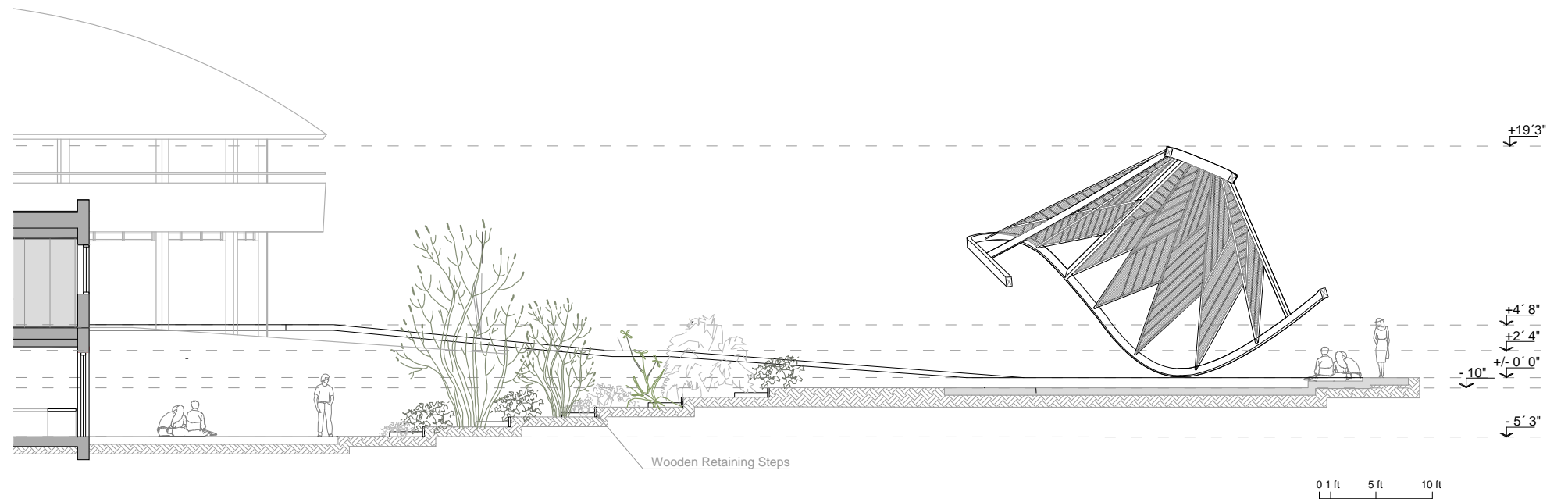
North Elevation



South Elevation



Garden and Arbour Plan



Garden and Arbour Section

Outdoor Teaching Garden



Exterior Teaching Garden + Gathering



Main Entry Lobby



Dome Gathering Space



Lower Level Interior and Exterior Teaching Garden

