



The Speed of Trust

A primary goal of the project to update the Mesa Verde Museum is to incorporate Indigenous perspectives that were absent in the original exhibits. In 2019, when this project began, the park knew we needed to develop a robust collaboration process. The new exhibits will blend traditional knowledge and Indigenous science with other ways of knowing including contributions from subject matter experts in archeology, history, and the natural sciences.

Weaving together diverse perspectives is challenging, but this project has created amazing opportunities to learn from tribal members who have been extremely generous with their time and knowledge. Many assumptions have been challenged, encouraging the park to rethink how to tell a more inclusive, nuanced story of the park and the many people who have been in relationship with this place over time.



Members of the Native Interpretation Working Group (NIWG), park staff, and exhibit designers gathered at Mesa Verde last August to review the recent design submittal.

As the project enters the final design phase, park staff will again be reaching out to the 27 Pueblo and Tribes with close ties to Mesa Verde. The design team hopes to include at least one quote, photo, and/or cultural item from each community. The project will need Indigenous artists. If you have recommendations please email amy_ireland@nps.gov.

Moving at the speed of trust takes time, but we hope the end result will be inspiring and relevant to all park visitors.

Theresa Pasqual Joins Design Team



Theresa Pasqual of Acoma Pueblo has been part of the Native Interpretation Working Group that has been providing guidance since the start of this project.

She will be joining the design team as a writer and will be helping ensure the exhibits reflect Indigenous communities with ties to Mesa Verde.

Pasqual is the former director of Acoma's Historic Preservation Office and is currently serving as the Executive Vice President of Indigenous Affairs for the Crow Canyon Archaeological Center.



RLMG, an acclaimed digital design studio that specializes in story-driven, interactive, dynamic, and educational installations, will be developing innovative audio visual solutions for the Museum (see image at left from their exhibit at the Eiteljorg Museum on Native art). They will be working with the exhibit designers to create immersive experiences and opportunities for park visitors to hear directly from tribal community members.

Empowering the Inclusion of Indigenous Voice



Jordan Fragua, Indigenous Ranger Intern from the Pueblos of Picuris and Ohkay Owingeh, overlooking Cliff Palace.

Updating a 100 year-old museum exhibits is just one of the ways Mesa Verde is working to create a more inclusive narrative. Park staff was recently recognized with the National Excellence in Interpretation Team Award for efforts in that area including production of a new film, [Footprints of](#)



[Our Ancestors](#), that premiered in June, 2023; an Indigenous Ranger Intern program that brings young people from tribal communities to work as park interpreters and educators; and a [virtual tour of Cliff Palace](#), featuring several of the Indigenous interns.

Other interpretive efforts include the [Mesa Verde Voices](#) podcast, which is going into its 6th season, and the [Mesa Top Loop audio tour](#), featuring TJ Atsyé, long time Mesa Verde staff member from Laguna Pueblo.

This past spring, the park also hired Nikki Shurack as a new Tribal Liaison. Shurack will be assisting Mesa Verde NP as well as Petrified Forest NP, Aztec Ruins NM, and Chaco Culture NHP with Pueblo and Tribal relationships and collaborations. Before joining the staff at Mesa Verde, Shurack served in the Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Historic Preservation Office.

Changes are already taking place at the Mesa Verde Museum. Some original exhibits have been removed to make room for construction of accessibility ramps. Temporary exhibits (see photo at left) interpret ancestral and contemporary Indigenous pottery with information provided by descendant community members, archeologists, and curators.

Get Involved!



Mesa Verde's Chief of Interpretation & Visitor Services addresses members of the Mesa Verde Foundation.

Donate:

Mesa Verde Foundation is raising funds to help make the Museum inspirational. Learn more at mesaverdefoundation.org

Share your story:

If you have stories, photos, or mementos that express your connection with Mesa Verde, please email amy_ireland@nps.gov

Offer Feedback:

If you would like to review our next design submittal email amy_ireland@nps.gov

You can find past newsletters at www.nps.gov/meve/museum-renovations.htm

Project Milestones to Date:

- Conducted front end evaluation
- Pre-design/project scoping
- Outreach to tribal communities
- Establishment of NIWG
- Content development process
- Selection of preferred alternative
- Creation of narrative arc
- Initial text drafts and graphics
- Identification of potential cultural items
- Installation of accessibility ramps

We are Here

Current Phase Design Development III:

- Creation and refinement of exhibit text
- Preliminary exhibit drawings
- Selection of cultural items
- Development of audio-visual content
- Prototyping of exhibit elements.

Expected completion of this phase by summer 2025

Next Steps:

- Production documents: fall 2025
- Exhibit fabrication: winter/spring 2026
- Exhibit installation: summer 2026