

Tekakapimək Contact Station

At Katahdin Woods and Waters
National Monument



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Architectural, landscape, and exhibit designs resulted from a process between Elliotsville Foundation, representatives of the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, Mi'kmaq Nation, Passamaquoddy Tribe, and Penobscot Nation. All Wabanaki Cultural Knowledge and Intellectual Property shared within this project is owned by the Wabanaki Nations listed above.



Introduction

Tekakapimək Contact Station is a stunning, 7,900 square-foot building and 23 acre site atop Lookout Mountain, created to welcome the global public to Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument in Maine, USA. Tekakapimək is Penobscot for “as far as one can see” - pronounced *deh gah-gah bee mook*. As singular as its surroundings, Tekakapimək Contact Station is a work of collaborative design and construction, intentionally imbued with Wabanaki knowledge.

The Land

Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument is located within the present and traditional homeland of the Penobscot Nation. The land and waters hold special significance to the Penobscot Nation and is inextricably linked with Penobscot culture, ceremonies, oral traditions, language, history, and indigenous stewardship which continues the respectful relationship with the land and waterways that has gone back more than 11,000 years. Katahdin is a culturally significant place to the Wabanaki people where connecting watersheds provide important travel routes for Wabanaki people of Maine, comprised of Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot Nations.

Spanning 87,563 acres in north-central Maine, the rivers and streams within the monument encompass one of the least developed watersheds in the northeastern United States. The monument is a designated International Dark Sky Sanctuary, with some of the darkest skies east of the Mississippi River. Geologic formations throughout the monument provide striking visual evidence that marine waters covered the area in the periods immediately following the Cambrian era. The forest represents a unique transition zone between northern boreal and southern broadleaf deciduous forests; wetlands support important cultural materials that Penobscot people have sustainably harvested for generations.

The first documented European American exploration of the Katahdin region dates to 1793. Many early surveys of the area were supported by Penobscot guides, as were the evocative experiences and observations of Henry David Thoreau. By the early-19th century, logging was a dominant business and impacted the daily lives of many in the Katahdin region. Logging camp sites were created throughout monument lands and also served recreationists. To access upstream forests, the earliest loggers felled enormous white pines and “drove” them down the East Branch of the Penobscot River and its major tributaries toward Bangor. The Millinocket plant of the Great Northern Paper Company was the world’s largest paper mill when it opened in 1900, and was the region’s primary economic driver through the 20th century.

Note on Usage

Any publication using materials provided herein must include the following statement: *All Wabanaki Cultural Knowledge and Intellectual Property shared within this project is owned by the Wabanaki Nations.*



Creation of the Monument

Roxanne Quimby – a cofounder of the international brand Burt's Bees – began purchasing land in the Katahdin region in 2001. At the time, large tracts of timberland that had been owned commercially for approximately 150 years were coming on the market. Following a long public debate about whether and how to conserve this part of Maine, Quimby and her foundation, Elliotsville Foundation, Inc. (EFI), gifted the lands that now comprise the monument to the people of the United States to be managed by the National Park Service (NPS). Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument was formally established by Presidential Proclamation on August 24, 2016.

For each unit of the National Park Service, a purpose statement identifies the specific reasons for its establishment. The statement for Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument reads as follows:

The purpose of Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument is to preserve the nationally significant natural, cultural, and ecological resources associated with Maine's North Woods; to facilitate the shared stewardship of the resources, landscapes, and environments that contribute to the culture and identity of Penobscot Nation within their traditional homeland; to safeguard the character of the free flowing and scenic rivers and streams within its boundaries; and to provide a broad range of opportunities for public enjoyment, recreation, and inspiration.

With the transfer of land to the Department of the Interior, time-limited reserved rights were written into certain deeds that allowed for EFI as a private entity to create a Visitor Contact Station. In 2018, EFI provided notice of its intent to exercise that reserved right on what is today known as Lookout Mountain, and opened official consultation with the National Park Service for this purpose.

Process

Engagement of Design Team

Significant work on the development of the visitor contact station began in 2019. Architectural, landscape, and exhibit designs resulted from a process built on deep learning and respect, only moving at “the speed of trust”. Norway-based Canadian architect, Todd Saunders, was engaged as the building’s design architect. Representatives from Elliotsville Foundation, Inc., led by Lucas St. Clair, and the NPS, including then superintendent Tim Hudson, participated in visioning sessions that identified the contours of the project: a building that would draw visitors in while encouraging them to experience the land; interpretive materials that would capture the layered and nuanced history of the place; sustainable and climate-resilient construction. In Roxanne Quimby’s own words, it was to be a visitor facility “that is as inspiring as the endless forest and waterways of the land itself.”

Respecting its natural features, EFI assembled a design team that would bring a thoughtful sensitivity to this place. In addition to hiring Saunders Architecture, the roster includes Reed Hilderbrand, a Cambridge, MA and New Haven, CT-based firm that led the landscape architecture. The design integrates the visitor experience with nature, and creates an inclusive environment with multiple access routes onto and throughout the site. Alisberg Parker Architects of Connecticut served as the architect of record, overseeing design development, construction drawings, and construction details. Portland-based Wright-Ryan Construction was selected as the construction manager, and Haley Ward of Bangor provided civil and structural engineering services.



On site collaborative design meeting, Credit: Landyn Francis, Penobscot

Partnership with Wabanaki

In 2019, EFI also initiated relationships with representatives of the Wabanaki tribes in Maine. Discussions began with the Abbe Museum's Native Advisory Council in Bar Harbor. The Abbe team shared its experience operating in Acadia National Park and its efforts at decolonizing the museum, an ongoing process to share authority for the documentation and interpretation of Wabanaki culture. These conversations identified the unique opportunity for Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument to create an interpretive site from the ground up that is imbued with Wabanaki world views, which are often erased, inadequate, or represented by colonized versions of Indigenous stories in public sites.

Building on introductions facilitated by the Abbe, members of the Native Advisory Council soon began working directly with EFI. The members of this group, now identified as the Wabanaki Advisory Board, include: Natalie Dana-Lolar, Passamaquoddy/Penobscot, John Dennis, Mi'kmaq, James Eric Francis, Sr., Penobscot, Nick Francis, Penobscot, Gabriel Frey, Passamaquoddy, Jennifer Gaenzle, for Mi'kmaq, Suzanne Greenlaw, Maliseet, Newell Lewey, Passamaquoddy, Jennifer Neptune, Penobscot, Kendyl Reis, for Mi'kmaq, Richard Silliboy, Mi'kmaq, Donald Soctomah, Passamaquoddy, Chris Sockalexis, Penobscot, Isaac St. John, Maliseet and Susan Young, for Maliseet.

In November 2019, the Wabanaki Advisory Board, EFI, NPS, and the project architect of record gathered to review initial design concepts. This convening marked a turning point in the project. Concerns were raised by members of the Wabanaki Advisory Board that the initial design perpetuated colonial tropes. This point of potential fracture was turned into an opportunity: EFI directed Saunders Architecture

to develop a new vision with input and sign-off from the Wabanaki Advisory Board, resulting in conceptual plans that were embraced in early 2020 and manifested in the building today.

As Todd Saunders later reflected, “We wrote off all of the work that had gone before. For if we were really serious that this project was to be a partnership and not an imposition, a genuine product of and celebration of Wabanaki culture both then and now, we needed to start again, to learn to carry only what was needed, wanted, and wished for.”



Tekakapimək Artisan Clay Tiles in production. Left to right: Gabriel Frey, Passamaquoddy, Suzanne Greenlaw, Maliseet, Nolan Altvater, Passamaquoddy, Giuliana O'Connell, Malley Weber, Sarah Sockbeson, Penobscot, Credit: Erin Hutton

Confronting Legacies of Colonialism

EFI went on to support awareness training for all project participants that was steered by Dr. Jane Anderson, Associate Professor of Anthropology and Museum Studies and a Global Fellow in the Engelberg Center for Innovation Law and Policy in the Law School at New York University. Specializing in the philosophical and practical problems of using intellectual property law to protect Indigenous/traditional knowledge, Dr. Anderson led study and trainings that explored how colonizing forces erased and appropriated Indigenous knowledge and culture. Participants in the training studied a number of sources, including the Australian government's Protocols for Using First Nations Cultural and Intellectual Property in the Arts.

This work with Dr. Anderson was supported by EFI to ensure designers, contractors, funders, and project staff were entering the Wabanaki collaboration with respect and a shared understanding of past and present dynamics. These conversations also paved the way for a Memorandum of Agreement between the Wabanaki Advisory Board and EFI, as well as agreements between the Wabanaki Nations and the NPS to protect Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property within Tekakapimək Contact Station into the future. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples directs States to recognize and protect Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property ("ICIP"). While the building, site, and interpretive installations will ultimately be donated to the U.S. federal government, the cultural and intellectual property will forever remain with the Wabanaki Nations. These unprecedented protections, which followed deep learning, allowed for a novel design and construction process, and encouraged valued working relationships that continue.

This evolution has been described by Wabanaki Advisory Board member Natalie Dana Lolar, Passamaquoddy/Penobscot, as "The Invisible Monument." In her words: "It is the trusting relationships that are being made, the change that is happening to these processes, and the daring of people to collaborate in a different way. It is the internal change within each person as we sit with the uncomfortable truths that arise from taking an active role in decolonizing. It is the healing tendrils that can spread from those people that have had their eyes opened."

Tekakapimək Contact Station was designed and built with Indigenous knowledges and design innovation from the Wabanaki Nations. It intentionally incorporates cultural narratives, languages, designs, images, kinship relations, ancestral representations, and contemporary cultural practices that come from these lands and waters.

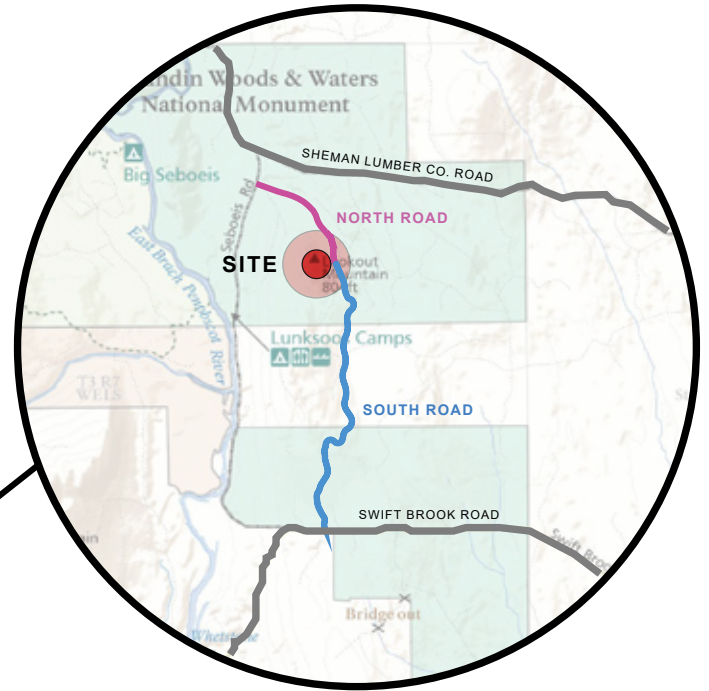
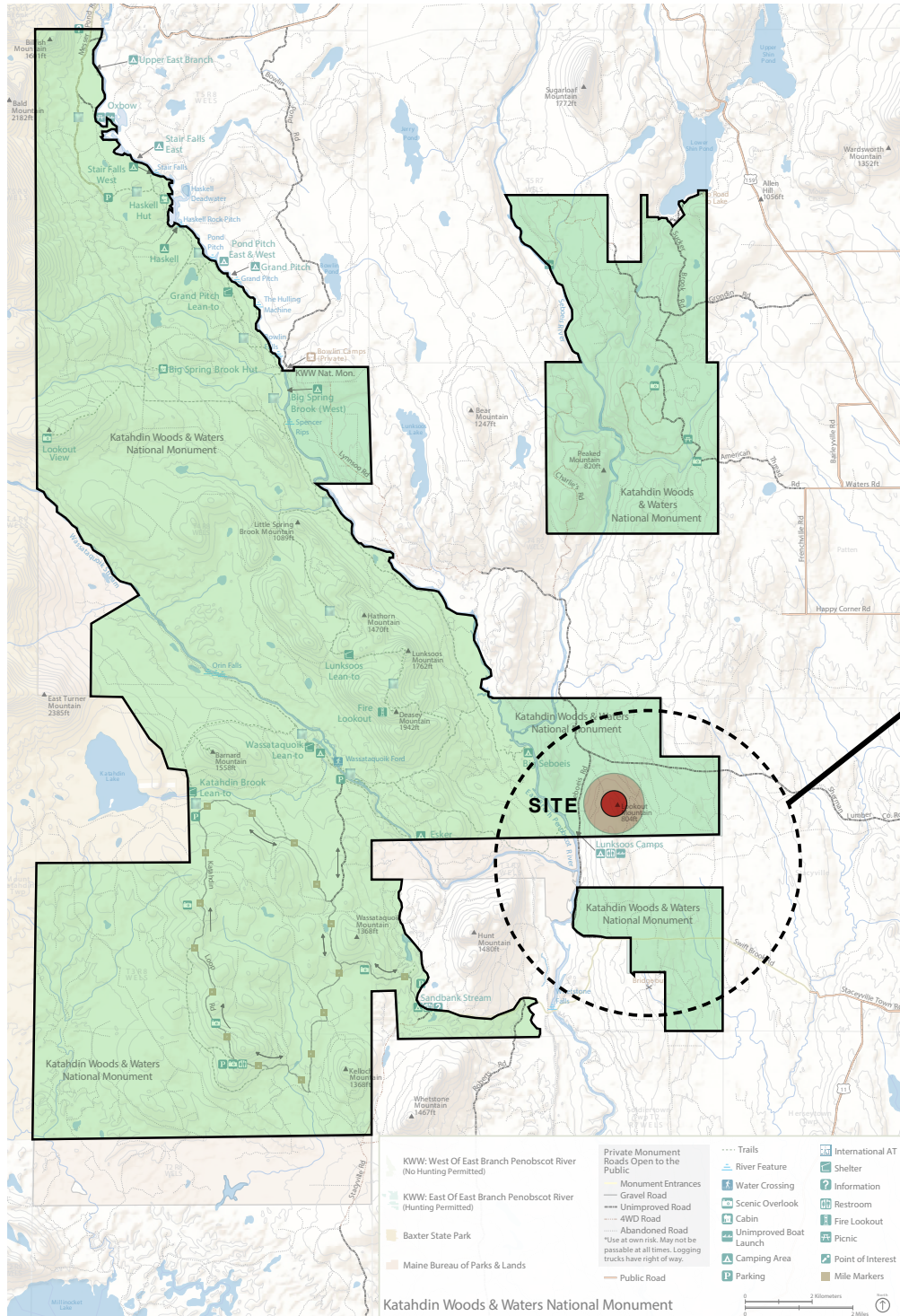
All Wabanaki knowledge that is shared at Tekakapimək is the intellectual and cultural property of the individual and collective Wabanaki Nations. Control and authority over such Wabanaki knowledge remains with the Wabanaki Nations for the benefit of future generations.

The knowledges shared in this space are used to educate and celebrate ongoing cultural vibrancy and Tribal Nation sovereignty, and to help all visitors be aware of whose Homelands you are on and who has been responsible for caring for these lands and waters for generations.

In coming to and being with this place, you are also asked to be a respectful guest.

Intellectual Property Statement featured in the entry area of Tekakapimək.

Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument





Illustrative site plan along the Tekakapimæk East-West axis, Credit: Reed Hilderbrand

Design

Building Location + Site Access

Tekakapimək Contact Station lies at the southeastern corner of Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument. Cantilevering over the west facing slope of Lookout Mountain, the building features views across the expanse of the monument to Katahdin and up the East Branch of the Penobscot River, while hidden from paddlers below. An eastern lookout and Gathering Circle allow visitors to greet the day's first light, reflecting the traditions of Wabanaki – “People of the Dawn”.

To reach Tekakapimək, a new 3.6 mile access road was created heading north off the Swift Brook Road, through the site, and south to the Seboeis Road. Designed by Reed Hilderbrand and Haley Ward, Inc., and constructed by Emery Lee & Sons of Millinocket with construction management by Wright-Ryan, it ascends through a series of sinuous curves, tracing the wider mountainous landform. Arriving at the 23-acre site, the road and parking are separated topographically from the Visitor Contact Station building. Paths that circuit the site provide visitors with a dramatic reveal of the building and monument lands.

Landscape Design

The landscape design of Tekakapimək by Reed Hilderbrand with ODP Trailworks flows to the Visitor Contact Station at the western terminus of an east-west axis, where it frames breathtaking views of Katahdin itself. Along the east-west line is a level, crushed stone path marked by islands of vegetation. Naturally occurring mounds or “pillows” of organic soils, preserved to support tree and plant life, encourage visitors to meander or take a few minutes to rest. To the east is a Lookout where the horizon

opens to all of the Wabanaki homelands. The eastern terminus is accentuated by a Gathering Circle with four arced benches around a Wabanaki Double Curve motif rendered in stone relief. Materials used on site are limited to wood, steel, and locally-sourced granite. Bedrock excavated from the site is reused for base material for surfaces as well as riprap for stormwater management. No plants were brought to the site. Instead Tekakapimək's landscape character is emergent, the expression of a rich seedbed found in the topsoil of the surrounding late successional forest.

Site elements throughout Tekakapimək express the seven directions as understood by the Wabanaki. Seating and structures are oriented North-South, East-West; the Eastern Lookout's Gathering Circle reinforces connections to Sky, Earth, and Center. All 23-acres afford a holistic connection with the surrounding woods, waters as well as vast tribal homelands beyond.

Just as the East Branch of the Penobscot River, flowing through the monument far below the Contact Station, is part of connected watersheds unifying Wabanaki communities, this landscape architecture unifies Tekakapimək. As described by John Grove, Reed Hilderbrand's principal-in-charge, “This varied composition of connected spaces along the East-West line are simply detailed but expressive and could be imagined through the metaphor of a cascading river journey. The Gathering Circle as a pool, block seats carved as if flowing with falls and rapids, stairs as places to portage, mounds as islands, paths as moving river, and benches as banks.”

On arrival and throughout the site, visitors are guided by signage inclusive of Wabanaki languages and fabricated with an echo of birch bark canoe lashing. Interpretive waysides evoke understanding of the geologic epochs that shaped the region and its human and non-human relatives who have known this place as home for millenia.

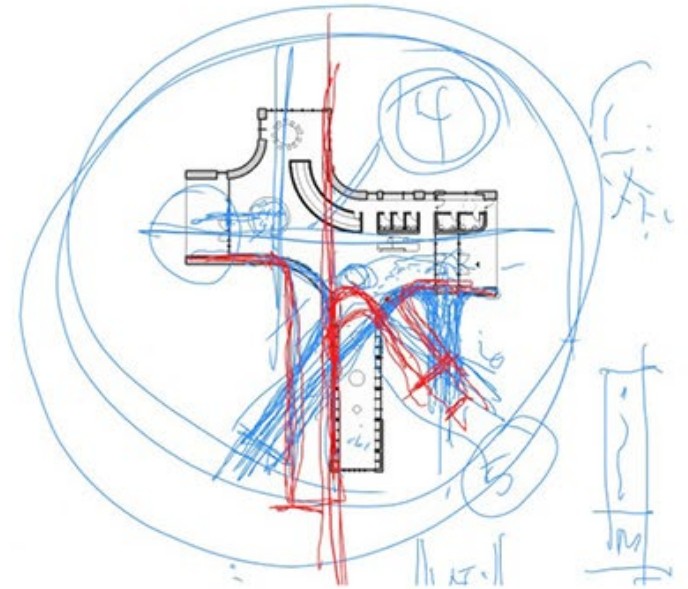
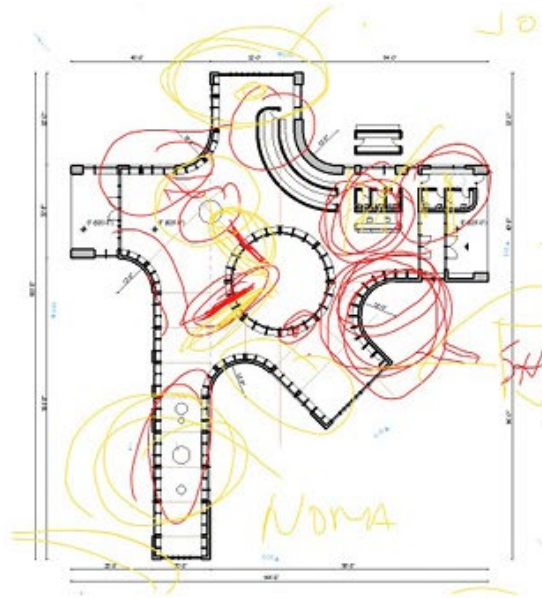
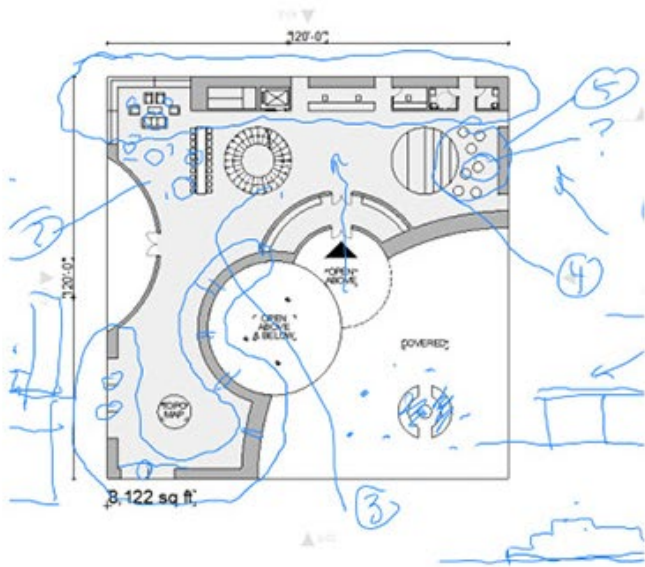
The site's main internal routes, about one-quarter mile of paths, follow along the ridgeline, weaving through the forest. Tekakapimək provides routes and features designed to make areas accessible throughout the site, including the Eastern Lookout's Gathering Circle via an outdoor recreation access route. There is handicapped parking in the main parking area close to pedestrian routes, as well as near the entrance to the building. In keeping with Tekakapimək's role within an International Dark Sky Sanctuary, no additional lighting is used anywhere in the landscape.

Tekakapimək, East-West line, Reed Hilderbrand & OBP Trailworks, LLC,
Credit: Wright-Ryan Construction





Rendering of Eastern Lookout and Gathering Circle with etched Wabanaki double-curve, Credit: Reed Hilderbrand & WeShouldDoItAll



Evolution of early building renderings, Credit: Saunders Architecture

Building Design

The building design by Saunders Architecture constitutes multiple unique elements. After initial feedback from the Wabanaki Advisory Board, the design trajectory shifted from one of a colonial lens to one based on Wabanaki sensibilities, informed by the same directionality of the site design and deploying curvature throughout. Wabanaki advisors worked with Saunders to create an environment rooted in stories, design sense, culture, art, and voices of Wabanaki people.

In harmony with the landscape design, the building is informed and oriented by its surroundings. Early in the design process, in November 2020, a 1:1 floor plan was staked out by the design team and Wabanaki Advisory Board members, allowing one to experience the space and feel its scale. Additionally, high-quality renderings were developed early on to help bring visitors into the imagined space, providing a sense of materiality, quality of light, and allowing for interpretive ideas to multiply.

Upon entering the building, one meets sweeping westward vistas toward Katahdin, meaning “greatest mountain” in the Penobscot language. A south wing captures the warm and ever-changing light of the sun, passively heating and illuminating. The north holds a gathering space and reminds visitors to look skyward in this International Dark Sky Sanctuary. Near the eastern entry door is a fitting welcome area and, in the center, one can experience all directions converging in balance.

An early and impactful element of the design was to create deep walls. These walls serve as structure and seating, while offering framed views and areas to display content. The seemingly random placement of the handmade columns is based on a 12’ structural grid. Infill columns provide additional support and create 2’ deep bays of varying widths. Each bay can contain various functions based on the programmatic needs, keeping the main floor space clear.

Nature illuminates the interior of the building. Punched windows at various heights set within the thick walls and large expanses of bird-safe glass facing the four cardinal directions provide a dynamic play of light across the interiors throughout the day and throughout the year. Three fireplaces, combined with the Douglas fir interior and abundant natural light, create a sense of warmth that will invite reflection and provide comfort for monument visitors seeking refuge from the elements.

Project Specs

Built area / 7,896 sq ft (734 m2)
Occupancy / 242
Custom columns / 165
Design phase / 2018-2020
Construction phase / 2021-2024

Site / 23 acres
Road / 19,400 ft
Accessible paths / 1,550 ft
Solar array / 2,700 sq ft



Tekakapimæk exterior, under construction in November 2023, Credit: Shaun Gotterbarn



Tekakpimæk exterior detail with Maine cedar shingles, Credit: James Florio



Tekakapimék interior with exhibition, Credit: James Florio

Interpretation and Exhibition Design

Tekakapimək’s exhibits orient visitors to the monument, inspiring them to experience Katahdin Woods and Waters from its peaks, trails, rivers, and non-human relatives, to its ever-changing foliage and brilliant night sky. Interpretation is through a Wabanaki lens - culture, knowledge, language, arts, and history – in a contemporary context, honoring the past and showing vibrant communities moving sustainably into the future.

The exhibition design offers an immersive, accessible, and engaging experience for all visitors. Exemplifying Wabanaki design and traditional forms, the exhibits feature tactile and interactive elements, immersive photography, illustrations, video, and sound. Evocative storytelling stimulates a personal connection with Katahdin Woods and Waters and all that it holds. The exhibition generously welcomes visitors while celebrating the resilience, creativity, and contributions of ancestors and Wabanaki people today.

Interpretive plans were co-created with Wabanaki and other regional partners, Penobscot exhibition writer Jennifer Neptune, Tuhura Communications, Elliotsville Foundation, and the National Park Service. Exhibits, wayfinding, and signage design was led by WeShouldDoItAll (WSDIA), with exhibition fabrication by Split Rock Studios. Creative program management was overseen by Erin Hutton Projects of Maine.

Neptune’s expertise provides context, interpretation, and relevant information about the exhibit objects, artists, historical background, themes, and concepts presented at Tekakapimək. Interpretive subject matter includes the lifecycle of the Atlantic salmon - with lifelike fabrications, the “frog monster” Penobscot River origin story, and the celestial panorama of a bear chase across the night sky through the seasons.

“I hope that Wabanaki tribal members are able to see themselves reflected in the exhibits and be proud of who they are and the culture that our ancestors saved for us. I hope that all visitors come away with a deeper understanding, respect, and relationship to these woods and waters and to the places they call home.”

Jennifer Neptune, Penobscot



Tekakapimək, lifecycle of the Atlantic salmon exhibit including alabaster salmon (L) by Tim Shay, Penobscot, Credit: James Florio

Commissioned Works

Recommended by members of the Wabanaki Advisory Board, artists representing each of the four Wabanaki Nations created commissioned works of art that are integrated with the building architecture, landscape design, and exhibition themes. These works of master craftsmanship intuitively engage people with Wabanaki symbols, language, and culture as visitors move among themed areas relating to the monument's lands, waters, and its many inhabitants. While the completed works will be transferred to the Department of the Interior, individual artists shall retain associated intellectual property and rights.

The deeply symbolic and time-honored double curve design appears throughout Tekakapimək. The Wabanaki Advisory Board worked with artist and historian James Eric Francis Sr., Penobscot, to create new double curves. These were then combined into a unified circular design to symbolize the strength of the tribes united in support of each other, yet each separate, sharing history, kinship ties, culture, and connections. The individual double curves and unified design appear in overt and subtle ways: etched in granite as the centerpiece of the eastern Gathering Circle; cast in bronze as entry, interior, and balcony door handles carved by Gabriel Frey, Passamaquoddy; installed in water station area on ceramic tiles handmade by Wabanaki artisans; on exterior signage; and incorporated as features to be discovered in additional works.

As visitors move through the Contact Station building they are oriented to the Penobscot Watershed. Concrete etched tiles spanning Tekakapimək's floor area depict a map from the river's headwaters to the Penobscot Bay estuary. Essential landmarks, placenames, and

elements, such as portage routes, are featured. Researched, designed, and drawn by James Eric Francis, Sr., Penobscot, and fabricated by Spring Valley Corp., the floor design highlights that waterways are central to the Monument and an ongoing way of life.

Above the Contact Station welcome and information desk, a rippling woven copper ceiling showcases the talent and artistry of basket techniques adapted by a team of Wabanaki weavers. The integration of startlingly beautiful weaving into the ceiling and wall of the main reception space communicates *we are still here*.



“Water Famine” painting by James Eric Francis Sr., Penobscot, depicts a story of the creation of the Penobscot River and water clans.



Penobscot Watershed Floor Map Art by James Eric Francis Sr., Penobscot, in production at Spring Valley Corp., Canada, Credit: Erin Hutton



Tekakapimək Welcome Desk weaving in production. Left to right: Shane Perley-Dutcher, Wolastoq (Maliseet), Neqotkuk Wolasqiyik (Tobique First Nation) in New Brunswick, Geo Neptune, Passamaquoddy, Sarah Sockbeson, Penobscot and Gabriel Frey, Passamaquoddy, Credit: Erin Hutton

Follow the River Home

Like the roads and highways you traveled on to arrive here, rivers serve as roads for canoes.

Think of the main stem of a river as a fast-moving interstate highway, with exits at smaller streams and tributaries to take you to your destination. Portage trails can act like shortcuts, connecting different watersheds to each other.

These watery highways have been connecting Wabanaki people to each other for thousands of years.

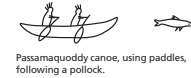
If you were to paddle a canoe home, which river routes would you follow?

Tomah Joseph (1837-1914) was a Passamaquoddy guide, canoe builder, and birchbark artist. He is well known for illustrating traditional Passamaquoddy stories with birchbark etchings.

Sapiel Selmore (1806-1903) was a Passamaquoddy keeper of traditional wampum belts, which kept the history of treaties and agreements between nations. He drew this series of four canoes in 1893 to represent the Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, and Penobscot. Each canoe follows an animal to represent their nation, and canoeists use a pole, paddle, or combination to represent the paddling condition of their rivers.



Look for this etching, of a man portaging a canoe, at traditional Wabanaki portage locations on the Watershed Floor Map.



Passamaquoddy canoe, using paddles, following a pollock.



Maliseet canoe, using poles, following a muskrat.



Chief Sapiel Selmore, Pleasant Point, 1901



Mi'kmaq canoe, using paddles, following a deer.



Penobscot canoe, using a paddle and a pole, following an otter.

Tomah Joseph—Passamaquoddy Elder, 1894



Look for these canoes, representing traditional Wabanaki canoe routes, on the Watershed Floor Map.

Exhibition panel excerpt featuring illustrations by Tomah Joseph (1837-1914) and Sapiel Selmore (1806-1903), Passamaquoddy; exhibit writing by Jennifer Neptune, Penobscot.



Tekakapimək artwork featured throughout the building highlights the traditions of basket weaving, wood carving and birchbark etching. Credit: James Florio.

Innovative Construction: Materials + Columns

With rock anchors embedded deep into cliffside ledge, team members at Wright-Ryan Construction including Jeff Heseltine, Vice President of Field Operations, have described a construction process akin to “building a ship on the side of a mountain.” The extensive and purposeful use of timber products inside and out is striking. Tekakapimək is clad in raw, locally-harvested and milled cedar. Structure and finishing are primarily wood and mass timber, this biogenic material making the building a “carbon sink”. If each length of wall and ceiling interior beadboard finish were laid end-to-end, the assembly would be 23 miles long. Cross-laminated timber used in the building was resourced sustainably and is Forest Stewardship Council-certified. Glulam is produced and manufactured on the U.S. East Coast.

A willingness to push boundaries led to maximum innovative use of nominal lumber – casting a light on the emerging sustainable bio-economy. A signature innovation of the project is the development of 165 custom-built, structural-grade Douglas Fir glulam columns. A one-of-a-kind process was created to ensure the wood retained a natural look and feel, with the columns laminated over a nine-month period in a former potato barn in Patten, Maine. With leadership by a Wright-Ryan team including Pete Brosey, Superintendent, Chris Simmons, Project Executive, and Mike San Antonio, Project Manager, an exacting process unfolded over nine months, with column sections subject to the American Institute of Timber Construction Shear and Cyclic Delamination Tests to assure bond strength and durability.

“Wright-Ryan has a 40-year history of working closely with community-based organizations throughout the region to assist in producing unique facilities in service to their mission. It is far and away the most rewarding work we do,” shared John Ryan, Wright-Ryan’s Co-Founder and Former President. “We will be forever proud to have been associated with the Tekakapimək Contact Station and this extraordinary endeavor.”



Tekakapimək under construction, Credit: Wright-Ryan Construction

Tekapimæk construction with custom glulam columns, Credit: Wright-Ryan Construction



Environmental Systems: Passive + Off-grid

Tekakapimæk conveys the conservation ethic of Wabanaki people who have lived compatibly with nature for thousands of years. This foregrounding of Wabanaki knowledge demonstrates the significance of co-stewardship to the conservation movement and the value of informing future decisions with Indigenous perspectives. Our Wabanaki partners remind us that animals, trees, rocks, and plants are all our relatives and that our fate is tied together.

Tekakapimæk is a model of sustainable design and construction – the building nears zero emissions – an example to visitors and a new standard within the National Park Service. The design of the Contact Station is based on a symbiotic relationship of the building to its environment. State-of-the-art green technology utilized in all aspects of the building demonstrates a significantly reduced carbon footprint relative to other buildings of its scale. Tekakapimæk utilizes local materials in every possible instance, is fully off-grid, solar and thermal powered, and maximizes passive design strategies for heating and cooling.

Utilizing the expertise of climate engineering firm Transsolar, Inc., the building design employs a 36.75 kW photovoltaic solar array for electrical service, storage with lithium-ion batteries, and a propane generator for backup. Strategies for heating include passive solar, radiant floor heat, interior thermal mass, a Trombe wall heat capture system for heating outside air, a great thermal envelope, and an air-source heat pump in tandem with a propane boiler. All cooling needs are met with natural cross ventilation, night flush cooling, thermal mass, exterior shading, and ceiling fans. The structure operates as a “thermal battery” with high thermal mass indoors.

Nestled in a forest, the building’s large window panes are bird-safe. Landscape material was sourced locally or from the site: blasted ledge from construction is repurposed as riprap to stabilize and restrain slopes; disturbed topsoil was collected, redistributed, and native plants are already regenerating; glacial erratics moved for construction augment outdoor seating; embankments shelter parking. Regenerative forest and land management practices support biodiversity throughout Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument.



Views from Tekakapimək, Credit: Wright-Ryan Construction



Eastern Gathering Circle with Wabanaki double-curve, Credit: James Florio

Impact

Economic

With the creation of Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument came a promise of jumpstarting growth in the burgeoning recreation economy of the Katahdin region. A 2021 study found \$2.8M in local spending among 40,000 annual visitors to the monument - numbers anticipated to grow over time, following the opening of Tekakapimək and additional investments to enhance visitor experience. These dollars spent on lodging, food, keepsakes, outfitting, guides and more are vital infusions for the next chapter of a rebounding Katahdin region.

The construction of Tekakapimək itself has had a local economic impact estimated at \$28 million, representing 80% of total expenditures. These dollars are benefiting contractors, businesses and artisans in the immediate region; Tribal members; and the workers and companies of greater Maine, all while showcasing their talents to the world.

Funded almost entirely with private philanthropic dollars, support for this project is led by Elliotsville Foundation, Inc., the Roxanne Quimby Foundation, Burt's Bees, National Park Foundation, L.L. Bean, NorthLight Foundation, and an Anonymous supporter, among many other generous contributors to Friends of Katahdin Woods & Waters' "A Monumental Welcome" campaign.

Social

Tekakapimək's intentional centering of Wabanaki knowledge and stories invites visitors to experience their own relationship with the history, present, and vibrant future of the monument's storied landscapes and the people who have lived here continuously for thousands of years. Contending with the painful history of settler-colonialism, cross-cultural expressions of growing trust and creativity have emerged and are growing: a confluence of people showing a way forward.

Elliotsville Foundation and the Wabanaki Advisory Board have begun documenting the collective story, learnings, and practical tools of this collaboration. This includes an MOU for the protection of Wabanaki Cultural and Intellectual Property, training on the history of colonial settler appropriation of such property, and innovative contracts that protect the rights of artists and accurately attribute Tribes' ownership of their cultural knowledge and symbols.

Key social learnings from this "Invisible Monument" body of work include the necessity to learn accurate history and to share power and benefits, despite any potential discomfort in doing so. Project leadership and participants now understand that taking time to share the goings on of everyday life, to reflect and regroup, is critical to building authentic relationships. Altogether, this approach can contribute to mutual healing within a specific collaboration while creating "healing tendrils" for our own communities and beyond.



Natalie Dana-Lolar, Passamaquoddy/Penobscot, and other Wabanaki Advisory Board members visiting Tekakapimək with their families during exhibition installation.
Credit: James Eric Francis, Sr., Penobscot

Future Generations

Tekakapimək will serve as a cornerstone for educating future generations: visiting learners of all ages from the Katahdin region and beyond will experience a new approach to history that centers a Wabanaki worldview. They will deepen their own relationship with nature and better understand the natural features of the monument. National and international audiences will learn from cross-cultural partnerships that brought Tekakapimək to life, making way for such groundbreaking work elsewhere.

Tekakapimək Contact Station is ultimately a continuum of place and time imbued with the animating spirit of ancestors and contemporary people. A six-year project, the elements of place, community, sustainability, and economic vitality will continue to converge. Tekakapimək reimagines our relationship with each other and natural and cultural landscapes. Tekakapimək promotes thriving communities and is built in balance with the land. We hope that like nature, it gives more than it takes.

Project Credits

Wabanaki Advisory Board:

Natalie Dana-Lolar, Passamaquoddy/Penobscot
John Dennis, Mi'kmaq
James Eric Francis, Sr., Penobscot
Nick Francis, Penobscot
Gabriel Frey, Passamaquoddy
Jennifer Gaenzle, for Mi'kmaq
Suzanne Greenlaw, Maliseet
Newell Lewey, Passamaquoddy
Jennifer Neptune, Penobscot
Kendyl Reis, for Mi'kmaq
Richard Silliboy, Mi'kmaq
Donald Soctomah, Passamaquoddy
Chris Sockalexix, Penobscot
Isaac St. John, Maliseet
Susan Young, for Maliseet

Indigenous Intellectual and Cultural Property (ICIP) Consultant:

Dr. Jane Anderson
ENRICH (Equity for Indigenous Research and Innovation Co-ordinating Hub)

Design Architect – Norway:

Todd Saunders
Saunders Architecture

Architect of Record – USA:

Alisberg Parker Architects

Structural Engineer:

Atelier One

Surveyor, Civil Engineer, and Structural Engineer of Record:

Haley Ward, Inc

Landscape Architect:

Reed Hilderbrand

Environmental & Energy Consultant:

Transsolar Inc

Interpretive Planning:

Tūhura Communications

Exhibit Writer:

Jennifer Neptune, Penobscot

Documentarian:

Nolan Altvater, Passamaquoddy

Documentarian:

James Eric Francis, Sr., Penobscot

Exhibits, Wayfinding & Signage Design:

WeShouldDoItAll (WSDIA)

Exhibition Fabrication:

Split Rock Studios

Signage Fabrication:

DCL

Site Work and Road Construction:

Emery Lee & Sons Inc.

Landscape Site Work:

OBP Trailworks, LLC

Construction Management:

Wright-Ryan

Creative Program Management:

Erin Hutton Projects

Project Management and Owner's Representative:

Stern Consulting International

Contributing Artists

Double Curve Bronze Door Handles: Gabriel Frey, Passamaquoddy

Double Curve Design: Wabanaki Advisory Board with
James Eric Francis, Sr., Penobscot

Penobscot Watershed Floor Map: James Eric Francis, Sr., Penobscot

Fireplace Storytelling Art & Poetry: Jennifer Sapiel Neptune, Penobscot

Birchbark Canoe: Ruben “Butch” Phillips, Penobscot

Talking Sticks: Erik Sappier, Penobscot

Beaded Bag: Jennifer Sapiel Neptune, Penobscot

Canoe Paddles: Joe Dana, Penobscot

Pack Basket: Richard Silliboy, Mi’kmaq

Canoe Setting Pole: Jason Pardilla, Penobscot

Mini Birch Bark Canoes: Gayle Phillips, Penobscot

Hiking Stick: Erik Sappier, Penobscot

Root Club: Erik Sappier, Penobscot

Clay Mural: Suzanne Greenlaw, Maliseet

Atlantic Salmon Sculpture: Tim Shay, Penobscot

Carvings - Face: Luke Joseph, Maliseet

Carvings - Eagle: Darrell Clement, Mi’kmaq

Fishing Spear: Jason Pardilla, Penobscot

Katahdin from the West Branch of the Penobscot, Painting, 1870:
Vigil Williams 1830–1886

Clay Mural: Gabriel Frey, Passamaquoddy

Black Bear Sculpture: Tim Shay, Penobscot

Artisan Clay Tiles:

Fiddlehead: Cricket Griffith, Maliseet

Flag Root: Gabriel Frey, Passamaquoddy

Bear: Natalie Dana-Lolar, Passamaquoddy/Penobscot

Pollock: Stephanie Francis Soctomah, Passamaquoddy

Canadian Lily: Suzanne Greenlaw, Maliseet

Double Curve: Tania Morey, Mi’kmaq/Maliseet

Owl: Nolan Altvater, Passamaquoddy

Reflections of a Woodland Walk, Wallpaper Mural: Sarah Sockbeson, Penobscot

Sweetgrass Braid Bronze Handles: Gabriel Frey, Passamaquoddy

Copper Desk Weaving:

Gabriel Frey, Passamaquoddy, Geo Neptune, Passamaquoddy,

Richard Silliboy, Mi’kmaq, Sarah Sockbeson, Penobscot,

Shane Perley-Dutcher, Wolastoq (Maliseet), Neqotkuk Wolasqiyik (Tobique

First Nation) in New Brunswick

Welcome Desk Carved Fish: Shane Perley-Dutcher, Wolastoq (Maliseet), Neqotkuk
Wolasqiyik (Tobique First Nation) in New Brunswick

Indigenous Language Speakers: Carol Dana, Penobscot, Newell Lewey,
Passamaquoddy, John Dennis, Mi’kmaq

Exhibition Photography:

James Eric Francis, Sr., Penobscot, Jason Pardilla, Penobscot,

Nolan Altvater, Passamaquoddy, Anita Mueller, Jarrod Rory McCabe and

Dominic Francis Casserly: Giant Giants, Mark Picard, Jamie Walter, Jennifer

Sapiel Neptune, Penobscot

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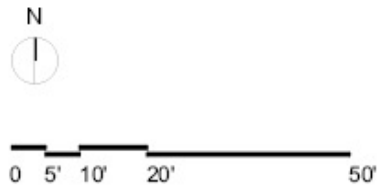
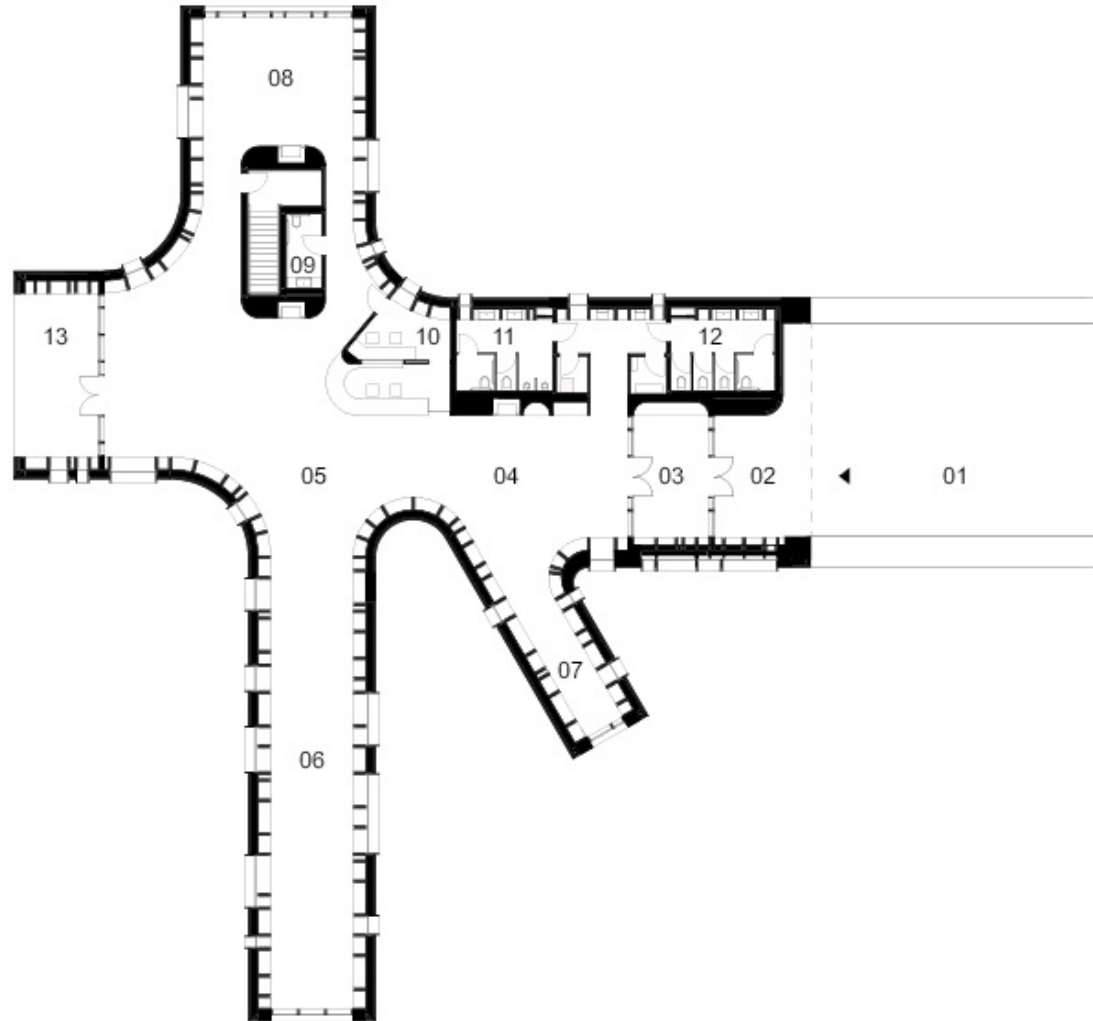
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Peter Knight & Gail Britton
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Steve & Vicki Richardson
The Via Agency

And many others

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Plan Ground Floor

- 01 Entry walkway
- 02 Covered entry
- 03 Vestibule
- 04 Entry area
- 05 Central exhibit area
- 06 South-east wing
- 07 South wing
- 08 North wing
- 09 WC
- 10 Office
- 11 Men's WC
- 12 Women's WC
- 13 Covered balcony





Sunset from Deasey Mountain in Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, Credit: Nolan Altvater, Passamaquoddy

Press Contact

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