

Native Arts and Cultures Foundation to gain ownership of Yale Union building in historic repatriation of property

PORTLAND, Ore. – The Native Arts and Cultures Foundation (NACF) and Yale Union (YU) are proud to announce the transfer of ownership of the land and historic Yale Union building at 800 SE 10th Ave. in Portland from YU to NACF.

“Together, the NACF board and staff believe that this free land and building transfer will set an example for recognizing the value of Native ownership of property in urban areas across the nation,” said NACF president/CEO Lulani Arquette. “It’s liberating and encouraging to witness this kind of support for First Peoples of this country. The potential for local community and national partnerships around shared interests through Indigenous arts and cultures is wide open. We are deeply grateful for this transformative opportunity afforded NACF by YU board and staff, and stand united with all to reclaim Native truth, engage anti-racism and address important issues we face today.”

NACF is a Native-led national organization committed to mobilizing Native artists, culture bearers, communities and leaders to influence positive social, cul-

tural and environmental change. It focuses on strengthening Native arts, providing artists and the creative community with the resources and tools they need to be successful, and expanding awareness and access to Native knowledge and truth.

NACF accepts this special property with great appreciation for what came before. We honor and respect the elders past and present, and acknowledge the land this building sits on and the previous Native Tribes and peoples who inhabited the land.

“I am proud of what we have accomplished with Yale Union over the last decade. Having been able to fulfill our mission through the unearned privilege of property ownership, it’s now time that we hand over the keys!” said Flint Jamison, president, Yale Union Board of Directors. “I am inspired by NACF’s leadership, unwavering commitment to their mission and capacity to operate on a large scale. I am eager to listen and learn from them as they use the land and historic building to fulfill their vision.”



Courtesy photo

The Center for Native Arts and Cultures in inner Southeast Portland

The new national headquarters for NACF will be called the Center for Native Arts and Cultures, and the property will continue to be a site of contemporary artistic and cultural production. The building will benefit the local community and be a strong cultural asset for the city of Portland.

NACF has just completed a planning process that determines its national programming and includes a vision for how it plans to maximize opportunities in the new space. The building will be a vibrant gathering place for Indigenous artists and local partnerships. It will provide space to present and exhibit, places to practice culture and make art, and areas for cultural ceremony and celebration.

There will be opportunities for broad community learning, including workshops and seminars covering pertinent issues relative to decolonizing space, anti-racism and environmental justice.

The process to transfer Yale Union’s historic property to NACF began in mid-2018 with discussions between YU’s then executive director, Yoko Ott, and YU’s board president, Jamison, regarding the art institutions’ potential for proposing models of restorative social change. Ott then made initial contact with NACF’s Arquette, which led to NACF conducting a thorough feasibility study.

In December 2019, NACF’s Board of Directors approved to move forward with taking ownership of the property. Both NACF and YU would like to acknowledge Ott’s vision and leadership in initiating this transfer of ownership.

Yale Union background

Since opening in 2010, Yale Union has provided public programming and presented the work of hundreds of artists through the labor of its dedicated board and staff, and the incalculable support of its donors, volunteers, colleagues and friends.

Yale Union has created and fostered a cultural community by hosting countless events, providing subsidized studio space to dozens of local artists and facilitating numerous community programs. It has preserved its historic building and used its 9,400-square-foot exhibition space to present the work of internationally recognized and under-represented artists in Portland.

Through its publishing imprint, YU has published 10 books and it has housed a unique and publicly accessible art library.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Yale Union has suspended in-person events for 2020, but will collaborate with NACF to co-present artistic programming in 2021. Later that year, Yale Union will dissolve its nonprofit.

The property transfer to NACF will serve as a natural culmination of Yale Union’s decade-long mission to support artists, propose new modes of production and stimulate an ongoing public discourse around art. Yale Union’s board and staff sincerely thank all of those who helped in achieving its mission and building a community of artists around the Yale Union building and beyond.

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Deadline for the October issue is Sept. 9.

Submission of articles and photos is encouraged.

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Member of the Native American Journalists Association

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Stay home if you can.

Wear a mask and social distance out in public.

Exercise a little patience.

Remember – we’re in this pandemic together.