

Tree T Lodge Project

The Tree T Lodge Project brings the opportunity to go from land acknowledgments to action. It takes the symbolic gesture to galvanizing reality. This modest proposal can become the grounded expression of a new understanding of the continental American land story.

The Tree T Lodge concept marshals the efforts of an alliance of groups in taking reparations to the next step in Akron. The alliance seeks to develop a center, a destination for local and other indigenous people to use as seems best for their needs and hopes.

The compelling reason for offering this plot of land is its location and natural state. The western property line abuts a decommissioned road called “Indian Trail”. Before it was so named, this route had been an established pathway for thousands of years. It was part of the portage path indigenous peoples used to cross from the Great Lakes watershed to the Mississippi watershed.

As a well-established path and landmark, it was used to define the western border of the expanding United States in the 1785 Treaty of Fort Macintosh. East of the portage, Europeans could settle legally. West of the portage was “Indian Territory”.

As is familiar from the relentless push to the Pacific, the treaty boundary only lasted for fifteen years before a new treaty extended the western boundary. But the Portage Path never disappeared. It was incorporated into the modern street grid, with different names as it runs along the ridge line between the two river landings at the rivers.

This section of “Indian Trail” is quite steep, but that is not the reason it was closed to automobile traffic. The hillside here is dotted with active springs, and despite the repeated municipal efforts to channel and confine the water, it continued to cause safety and maintenance challenges. With an abundance of fresh water, this steeply wooded section provides opportunities for wildlife to prosper in the midst of the neighborhood of homes surrounding it.

This decommissioned section of Indian Trail is the location for the Tree T Lodge - just below the highest point in the path, in the southern section of the eight mile portage.

The construction drawings for Tree T Lodge are complete. However, the alliance recognizes that these ideas need to transfer to the stewardship of its intended beneficiaries. The next step in the process is creating a salaried position for the indigenous leader.

The blueprints allow for a dialogue about reparations in a broad sense; to the land itself and to the history of the land. In their paper reality, they provoke conversations about ownership, and our impact the landscape. The aspiration of the Tree T Lodge Project is to acknowledge and rectify the historical imbalance represented in the 1785 treaty by confronting it in real time space. The project aims to redress that imbalance between the material and the spiritual.