

COEUR D'ALENE

RESORT & CASINO

Location

Idaho, USA

Project Address

37914 South Nukwalqw, Worley, ID 83876

Project Type

Hospitality

Square Feet

170,000 sq ft

Year of Completion

2011

Occupant

Coeur d'Alene Casino guests, including spa visitors, conference groups, and resort users

Design Team

Mithun

Keywords

Palouse prairie, wetland forest, Native American, casino, resort

Awards

LEED Gold
2011 NAIOP Night of the Stars, Hospitality Finalist
2011 IIDA Northern Pacific Chapter INawards, Hospitality – Best of Competition

Main Biophilic Patterns

Connection with Natural Systems
Visual Connection with Nature
Non-Rhythmic Sensory Stimuli
Dynamic & Diffuse Light

*All photos courtesy of Mithun.
Prepared by Cory Nestor and Terrapin
Bright Green*

“We designed a corridor to run along the southern edge of the building, called the “skycatcher.” The idea was that no matter where you are in the elaborate layout of the building, you are oriented by the sun, and you know what time of day it is.”

Roger Gula, Principal at Mithun

PROJECT SUMMARY

At over 5 million acres, the Coeur d'Alene homeland spans three states (Washington, Idaho, and Montana), one biome, and three distinct ecosystems. Mithun was challenged with capturing the essence of this expansive territory and history of the tribe in the renovation and expansion of the The Coeur d'Alene Casino/Resort. Originally a Robert Venturi-esque structure composed of monumental roadside teepee entry ways and totem pole columns, Mithun's redesign captured the culture of the Coeur d'Alene people, sharing with guests the First Nations' wealth of history and contemporary culture.

The focus of the renovation was to integrate ecology and tribal history into the guest experience. In order to connect the building to the site and tribe, Mithun established three broad concept categories early on in the design.

The first concept is *nature*: observing the site's geographic location on the periphery of a forest and wetland, and the Palouse Prairie. The next is *time*: harnessing the existing building's east-west orientation and large south facing facade. Finally there is *sun*: encouraging the experience of seasonal

dynamics of the landscape and supporting the concept of time at several scales.

The project highlights the site's unique ecosystems, emphasizes natural lighting, and uses natural and local materials. These design choices connect guests to the importance of the landscape to the Coeur d'Alene. Paired with additional design elements and artwork, the resort celebrates the vibrant and unique culture of the Coeur d'Alene tribe.

Since 2011, the resort has undergone further renovations, some of which have changed the biophilic experience of the space.

Photo: The main pedestrian walkway, “Skycatcher”, provides views of the surrounding landscape.

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NATURE IN THE SPACE

- [P1] Visual Connection with Nature.**
Vegetated parking lot, full height glass windows along Skycatcher and covered walkway between casino and resort
- [P2] Non-Visual Connection with Nature.**
Not significantly represented in the design
- [P3] Non-Rhythmic Sensory Stimuli.**
Native landscaping sets the stage for non-rhythmic sensory stimuli; occupants on each floor have direct view of native landscaping
- [P4] Access to Thermal & Airflow Variability.** Spaces designed to catch natural light over the course of the day allows guests to move between warm sun spots and cooler shaded areas
- [P5] Presence of Water.** An internally lit water features traces the entryway of the resort, and a covered walkway between the casino and resort spans a seasonal wash
- [P6] Dynamic & Diffuse Light.**
The building layout is organized to take advantage of natural light based on when the spaces will be most used
- [P7] Connection with Natural Systems.**
The pedestrian walkways move through the native landscaping, and rainwater capture and retention in the courtyard

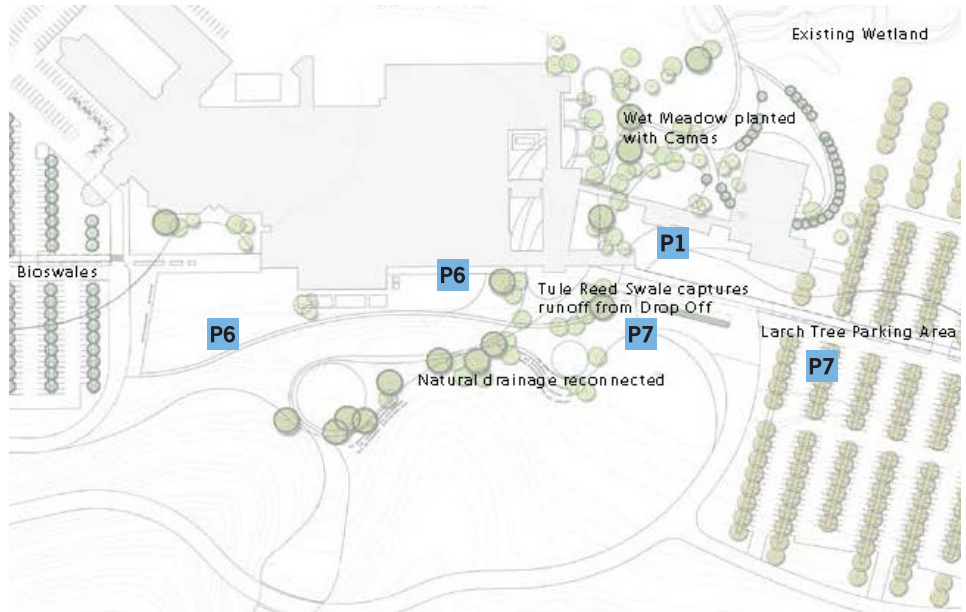
NATURAL ANALOGUES

- [P8] Biomorphic Forms & Patterns.**
Watershed LED installation featured in the lobby
- [P9] Material Connection with Nature.**
Timber construction is used extensively in the renovation; reclaimed tree trunks line the entrance to the steakhouse
- [P10] Complexity & Order.** Not significantly represented in the design

NATURE OF THE SPACE

- [P11] Prospect.** Unimpeded view along Skycatcher, and external views of the prairie
- [P12] Refuge.** Booth seating in restaurants, high backed chairs in walkways
- [P13] Mystery.** The entrance to the restaurant is concealed in a tight, dark entrance that opens into a daylight eating area with views of the garden
- [P14] Risk/Peril.** Not significantly represented in design

Site Plan: The forested parking lot and bioswales capture stormwater runoff and support natural drainage. A natural transect reestablishes a seasonal wash, connecting the watershed of the Palouse Prairie to the wetland forest, intersecting both the hotel entry and enclosed bridge to the spa/resort.



CAMPUS PLAN

[P7] CONNECTION W/ NATURAL SYSTEMS

Connection with Natural Systems is a prevalent pattern throughout the renovation. Its success is the result of a deep site analysis conducted to understand what natural features already existed on site, including cataloging hydrology, sun orientation and shading, and trees and vegetation. The team also did extensive testing of plant species at the site to understand how they are adapted to various conditions, and how to incorporate native species into the design. The results are landscapes that showcase species and ecosystems native to the area.

The design connects guests to the site from the moment they arrive, when they are taken through a grass field of perennial bunchgrasses and wildflowers. The Palouse Prairie is a critically endangered ecosystem connected to the large North American temperate grassland biome. Guests have the opportunity to witness temporal changes to this walkway over the duration of their stay, as well as seasonal variations. This walkway serves as the first and last guest experience of the facility, rooting it in nature and time.

The site also features an ethnobotanical walk that traverses the site from the Palouse prairie to the wetland forest ecosystems, as well as the transitional systems between them. There are signs along the walk to identify important ecological features and cultural uses of native plants.

The connection with natural systems—**awareness of natural processes that are characteristic of a healthy ecosystem**—continues as guests enter the hotel. Inside the lobby hangs a custom LED art installation that shows the complete watershed of Lake Coeur d'Alene. The hanging LEDs above represent the physical waterways through the watershed, while the map of the watershed carved into the stone floor below represents the landscape.

The project designers also commissioned tribal beadwork for each wing of the hotel that depicts various ecosystems within the tribe's territory. Each commissioned piece educates guests about the diversity of ecosystems across the Coeur d'Alene land.



[P1] VISUAL CONNECTION W/ NATURE

The guest's experience transitions from a vegetated parking lot, to the linear daylight walkway "Skycatcher," and across an elevated covered footbridge that connects to the casino and resort/spa. This pedestrian thoroughfare ensures daylight and **views to elements of nature, living systems and natural processes** are woven into all areas of the resort.

The lobby and reception area feature extensive glazing and views to the prairie beyond. The designers intentionally hid the parking area so that as soon as guests arrive, they would have unimpeded views of the natural environment.

The elevated footbridge between the casino and resort crosses over a seasonal arroyo/wash that is populated with native riverbed grasses such as tule reeds and camas, as well as water potatoes. This unique spot on the grounds has views to the Southern grasslands and Northern wetland and forest.

The amenities throughout the hotel feature views to the ethnobotanical garden, prairie, and forest for a diversity of visual connections with nature.



[P6] DYNAMIC & DIFFUSE LIGHT

Mithun designed the building's circulation based on solar orientation. The dramatic Skycatcher corridor takes advantage of the building's east-west layout, supporting the connection to Sun and Time. According to Roger Gula, "The idea was that no matter where you are in the elaborate layout of the building, you are oriented by the sun, and you know what time of day it is. We consciously organized spaces based on the time of day that they would receive sunlight."

This thoughtful consideration of daylight early in the design allowed the team to **leverage varying intensities of light and shadow throughout the day to create conditions commonly experienced in nature**. The quality natural light also eases the transition between indoors and outdoors.

Various seating areas take advantage of the light-filled space and encourage guests to use Skycatcher as more than a walkway, and to enjoy the views.

[P9] MATERIAL CONNECTION W/ NATURE

The renovation incorporates timber construction, including support beams over the entryway and in the Skycatcher corridor. The use of reclaimed and recycled wood adds local character and history to the design.

The timber motif continues in the materials selection for the lobby and other hotel amenities, creating a warm and inviting environment. The front desk is made of torched red oak and perforated steel. The entrance to the steakhouse restaurant is decorated with reclaimed tree trunks. The bark on the tree trunks is still intact, giving the space a rustic and warm feel. Once inside the restaurant, recycled timber creates a canopy over the leather booths. **By using minimal processing, the materials reflect the local ecology to create a distinct sense of place.**

The reception area of the spa features local stone. The spa's front desk is also made of reclaimed oak, maintaining a connection between the spa and hotel.

Left: The lobby and reception area feature an LED installation depicting the Coeur d'Alene watershed. Just beyond, Skycatcher's east-west layout allows natural daylight to fill the space throughout the day, flooding the interior with dynamic and diffuse light. Seating areas encourage guests to pause and enjoy the view.

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Right: Reclaimed wood is used in the steakhouse restaurant as a canopy over the booths. The restaurant also features views to the ethnobotanical garden.

P1 P9 P11

HEALTH BENEFITS

Mithun's application of the biophilic patterns have the potential to provide the following benefits to occupant health and wellbeing:

[P1] Visual Connection to Nature

Lower blood pressure/heart rate; improved mental engagement/ attentiveness; positively impact attitude and overall happiness

[P6] Dynamic and Diffuse Light

Positively impacted circadian system functioning; increased visual comfort

[P7] Connection w/ Natural Systems.

Enhanced positive health response; shifted perception of environment

[P9] Material Connection w/ Nature.

Decreased diastolic blood pressure; improved creative performance; improved comfort

The abundance of natural light helps support healthy circadian rhythm function. Daylight changes color over the course of a day, which in turn causes a biological response in humans that helps balance the production of melatonin and serotonin, depending on the time of day. Access to quality natural light has been linked to sleep quality, mood, alertness, depression, and other health conditions.

Construction materials and finish can also influence occupant health. Wood has been shown to have a calming effect, making it an ideal material for a resort and spa.

The most prominent pattern, Connection with Natural Systems, is suspected to enhance perception, appreciation, and stewardship of nature. Successful application of this pattern can evoke a relationship to a greater whole, as one becomes more aware of seasonal changes and the temporal cycles in nature. In this case, the pattern supports a connection not just to nature, but to the Coeur d'Alene culture as well.



BIOPHILIA AND CULTURE

The focus of the project was to integrate the site and tribal history into the guest's experience and to educate others about the Coeur d'Alene tribe. To incorporate the site and tribal culture into the design, Mithun interviewed members of the tribe to ask what it means to be the Coeur d'Alene tribe. According to reports from Mithun, "The land and Coeur d'Alene have been here since time immemorial, and they will continue to be here for just as long." They conducted a deep site analysis to develop a thorough understanding of how the landscape and the tribe's culture are inextricably linked. The resulting building has a strong sense of place, rooted in its ecological landscape and human culture.

The commissioned artworks expand upon these connections by demonstrating how precious the land is to the tribe. From the watershed map in the lobby to the beadwork pieces illustrating the diversity of ecosystems of the tribe's land, guests are exposed to the beauty and uniqueness of the land they are visiting. In addition to the commissioned artwork depicting nature, the interior design includes

exclusively designed Pendleton blankets, photographs, and tribal regalia. "These tribal-specific pieces grounded this place as a much beloved tribal fort," says Roger Gula.

Additional design elements, such as the scaled-up Eagle Staff, a natural analogue, that marks the entrance of the resort, further connect the design to tribe culture. The circular configuration of one restaurant is inspired by the dance circles that bring the tribe together, inviting guests to come together over a meal.

For the Coeur d'Alene Resort and Casino, biophilic design wasn't a premeditated strategy, but a tool to create a culturally and ecologically significant space. Such a design demonstrates how effective intuitive biophilic design communicates the uniqueness of place and culture for a memorable guest experience and beloved space.

Photo: The resort lobby features floor to ceiling windows overlooking the prairie. The fireplace's dancing flames are a welcoming distraction.

P1 P3 P7



Terrapin

Terrapin Bright Green is an environmental consulting and strategic planning firm committed to improving the human environment through high performance development, policy, and related research. In order to elevate conversations and help break new ground in thinking creatively about environmental opportunities to shape the outcome of large-scale planning and design projects around the world. Visit us at www.terrabinbrightgreen.com

Mithun

Mithun is committed to creating beautiful, vibrant cities that are smart about resources and conservation. They listen, clearly formulate ideas, collaborate, and always aspire to give back more than they take from the environment. "Our work" says Bert Gregory, Chairman and CEO of Mithun, "is rooted in the belief that buildings and landscapes should improve the ecology of place and directly reflect the mission of our clients." Visit them at www.mithun.com.