

**The Spencer Museum of Art Reflects on the Rematriation of the Sacred Red Rock to Kaw Nation
in a New Exhibition Featuring Artworks and Documentation**

In'zhúje'waxóbe: Return of the Sacred Red Rock
On View September 9, 2025 - January 25, 2026

Lawrence, KS (May 22, 2025)—On September 9, the Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas will open an exhibition that presents the rematriation of In'zhúje'waxóbe, or the Sacred Red Rock, to the Kaw Nation through a range of artworks and historical documentation. The Sacred Red Rock is a 28-ton red Siouxan quartzite boulder that originally sat at the confluence of the Kaw River and Shunganunga Creek near Tecumseh, Kansas, and that served as a source of immense cultural and spiritual significance for the Kanza people of the Kaw Nation. In 1873, when the U.S. government removed the Kanza from their land, they were separated from the Sacred Red Rock, which was also later moved to Lawrence, Kansas and incorporated into a monument to the town's settlers. In 2023, the Rock was finally rematriated to the Kaw Nation and now lives in Allegawaho Memorial Heritage Park. *In'zhúje'waxóbe: Return of the Sacred Red Rock* shares the story of this important monumental Stone through works and reflections by local artists and Kaw tribal citizens, including Chris Pappan, Dave Loewenstein, James Pepper Henry, Lisa Grossman, and Kylie Mehojah, among others. The exhibition will remain on view through January 25, 2026.

In'zhúje'waxóbe: Return of the Sacred Red Rock is curated by Sydney Pursel, the Spencer's Curator for Public Practice, alongside an advisory committee of Kaw Nation citizens. It is part of a broader series of interrelated projects, which also include the creation of the documentary film, titled *Return of the Sacred Red Rock*, and the release of a book, titled *Shokí: How In'zhúje'waxóbe Returns Home and the Rematriation of a Stolen Monument*, from University Press of Kansas in 2026.

“This exhibition, and the In'zhúje'waxóbe: Sacred Red Rock project as a whole, highlights the power of community collaboration, advocacy, and activism in the spirit of reconciliation,” said Pursel. “I am excited to work alongside Kaw citizens to ensure that their history, stories, and culture is represented appropriately and accurately. My hope is that this exhibition will further engage our audiences, including many K-12 and University students, with the history of Kaw Nation, as well as with current efforts to revitalize traditional practices and rematriate significant cultural and spiritual items to tribal nations.”

During the Ice Age, glaciers pushed red quartzite boulders from present-day South Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa and deposited them along their path ending in northeastern Kansas. One large stone was deposited at the confluence of the Kaw (Kansas) River and Shunganunga Creek. After the ice melted, some 600,000 years ago, the Rock stood more than 10 feet above the water. In the 1500s, the Kanza people established communities along these waterways and the Rock became an essential part of spiritual and communal rituals and gatherings. In 1825, in an effort to expand commercial traffic on the Santa Fe

Trail and to gain control of areas around the Mississippi River, the U.S. government compelled the Kanza to surrender the majority of their lands, reducing the tribe's approximately 20-million-acre domain to a reservation 30-miles wide. By 1860, their reservation in Kansas was reduced to 80,000 acres. In this process, the Kanza lost access to the Rock, which had become critical to religious and cultural activity. In 1929, the Rock was stolen and moved to Robinson Park and appropriated as a monument commemorating the founding settlers of Lawrence as part of the 75th anniversary of the town's founding.

In the 1990s, Kaw Nation citizen James Pepper Henry visited the Sacred Red Rock in Lawrence and vowed to one day bring the Stone home to the Kanza people. It would take more than two decades for this process to take root. In 2015, local artist Dave Loewenstein was conducting research for the Kansas People's History Poster Project when he became engaged with the Rock in Robinson Park. He contacted a member of the Kaw Nation Cultural Committee, Pauline Eads Sharp, to learn more. Their conversation, with the support of many others, including James Pepper Henry, solidified an ongoing and concerted effort to bring the Sacred Red Rock home. In 2019, they were able to secure an [Interchange](#) Grant, for their project [Between the Rock and a Hard Place](#), from the Mid-America Arts Alliance funded by the Mellon Foundation, to bring awareness of the Stone's history. Community events and other outreach served to educate and activate the public's support and continued over the next several years.

Finally, in March 2021, the Lawrence City Commission adopted [City/County Resolution No. 7358](#) to issue a formal apology to the people of the Kaw Nation for the appropriation of the Sacred Red Rock as a monument honoring white settlers and agreeing to its unconditional return. One year later, the University of Kansas, in collaboration with Kaw Nation and the City of Lawrence, secured a \$5,000,000, multi-year grant from the Mellon Foundation to oversee the return to Kaw Nation. In the summer of 2024, hundreds of people gathered in Allegawaho Memorial Heritage Park, a park owned by Kaw Nation that includes one of the three Kaw villages where Kanza people resided from the 1840s to 1872, for a Rematriation Celebration to commemorate the return of In'zhúje'waxóbe to its people and the Rock's new home in the Park.

In'zhúje'waxóbe: Return of the Sacred Red Rock explores the struggles and triumphs of this history through documentation, individual reflection, and artworks, including by important figures in this contemporary process like James Pepper Henry and Dave Loewenstein. Through a range of watercolors, drawings, photographs, and other works, the exhibition captures the significance of the Sacred Red Rock and deep meaning of the Rock's return to the Kaw Nation. Together, the works and materials in the exhibition reveal important historical narratives and their ongoing contemporary relevance.

"This project reflects the focus on interdisciplinary artistic investigations of monuments and shares the galvanizing power of communities. We look forward to bringing further attention to the project and establishing a record of art that connects with compelling narratives of advocacy and action," said Spencer Museum Director Saralyn Reece Hardy.

About the Spencer Museum of Art

[The Spencer Museum of Art](#), located on the University of Kansas Lawrence campus, explores the intersection of art, ideas, and experiences. With a diverse collection of more than 48,000 works, the Spencer is the only museum in Kansas with contemporary and historic artwork in all mediums from cultures across six continents. The Spencer Museum facilitates arts engagement and research through

exhibitions, artist commissions and residencies, conferences, performances, lectures, children's art activities, and arts and culture festivals. Admission to the Spencer Museum of Art is free.

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