

'A HOME AWAY FROM HOME'

PHOTOS BY S. DERRICKSON MOORE/SUN-NEWS
NMSU'S NEW American Indian Student Center, located east of Corbett Center, welcomes the public to grand opening ceremonies at 10 a.m. Saturday.

American Indian Student Center offers NMSU students a respite

By S. Derrickson Moore

DMOORE@LCSUN-NEWS.COM

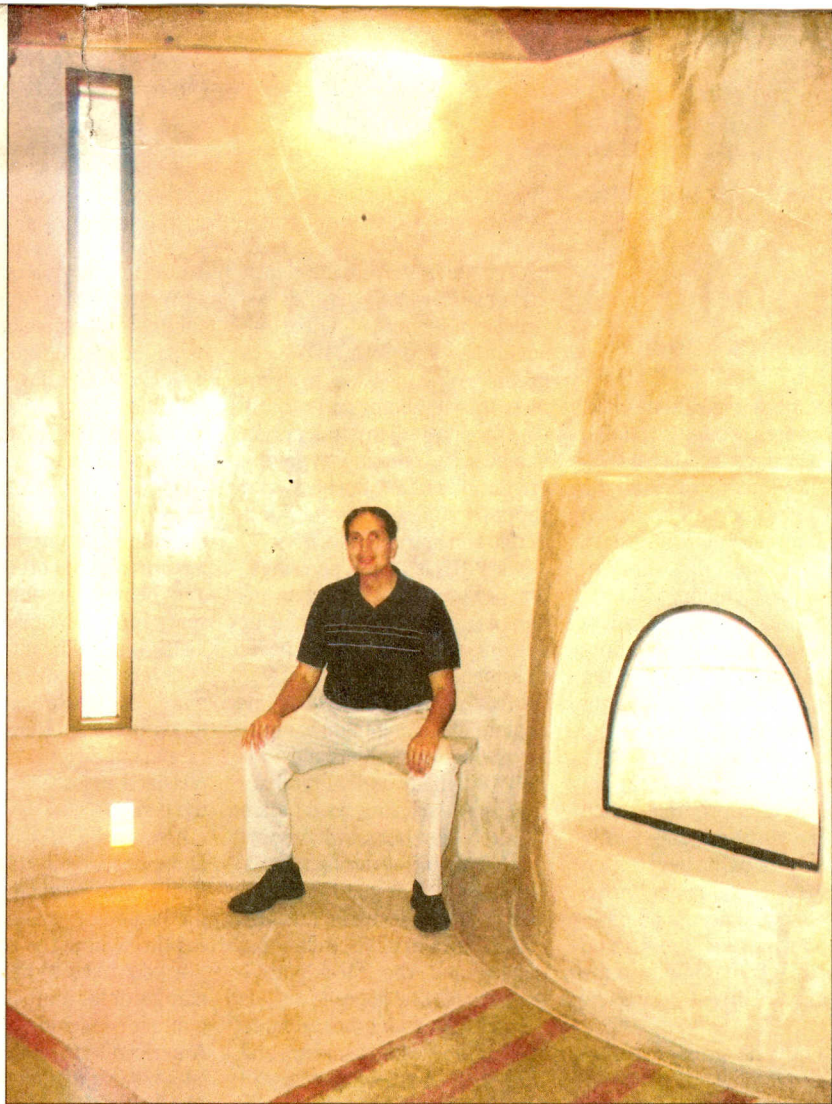
LAS CRUCES — The circular building is something of a serene surprise amid the bustling activity surrounding a new semester at New Mexico State University.

Tucked behind a group of weathered pine trees near NMSU's busy Corbett Center is a brand new gathering spot with some ancient design elements. Its circular design evokes ancient Chaco Canyon sites. A meditation room with a traditional pueblo-style fireplace offers a serene setting for contemplation. An outside patio commons is surrounded with inviting curved seating areas. Carved wooden doors and a floor with an inlaid Zia design coexist gracefully with modern offices, a bright kitchen area and multipurpose rooms ready for everything from computer labs to multimedia presentations and lectures.

The \$3.5 million, 7,451-square-foot American Indian Student Center is meant to be a "home away from home," for university students with American Indian roots, said Justin McHorse, director of NMSU's American Indian Program.

The AISC is the realization of a long-held dream for many, said Don Pepion, an associate professor of anthropology, Native American Studies and Education Management Development at NMSU.

"A lot of people from New Mexico tribes worked in conjunction with the (NMSU) administration, the state legisla-



JUSTIN MCHORSE, NMSU American Indian Programs director, here at the center's meditation room, hopes the center will be a "home away from home" for American Indian students.

ture and other founders to make his happen," said Pepion, a Ph.D. who has extensively researched his own heritage and the culture and ethno history of the indigenous Blackfeet peoples of Canada

and the U.S.

"The important thing is having a place where native students come together and

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