Indigenous Learning Place
Precedents Research
at Post-secondary Institutions

Prepared by
Indigenous Learning Place Committee

Carleton University
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Introduction

This report was developed as part of a special project at Carleton University, begun in the fall of 2016, which is looking at creating an “Indigenous learning place” on the campus, on the location of the existing outdoor amphitheater adjacent to the campus’s Patterson Hall. More information on the project, the project committee and the site is located here: https://carleton.ca/fass/indigenous-learning-place/

As part of thinking about the potential purposes, forms and activities of this place, a study of ‘precedents’ was undertaken by members of the project committee’s design committee. This report is a draft compilation of examples of similar projects at other post-secondary institutions across Canada, and a few in the USA.

The detailed documentation of these existing projects have been helpful to share as part of discussing the eventual purpose and design of the new place during multiple processes of consultation over the last year. These questions include:

- What principles/themes should underscore the project and how should they be incorporated into the name of the site?
- What should the space be used for?
- What are some physical characteristics you would like to see in the completed project?
- How can the space be representative/inclusive for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples?
- How can the space highlight the fact that it (and the rest of Carleton) is on unceded Algonquin territory?
- While maintaining the integrity of the space being designed as Indigenous space, how can it also be welcoming to settlers?

The authors of the report are Carleton University students Émélie Desrochers-Turgeon, Darren Zanussi and professor Susan Ross.

Consultations continue, and we are always interested to learn of more examples, so please contact us with further suggestions.

Project and committee mission statement:

This project embraces an ethic of ‘activating, tending, and stewardship’. The project is responsive to the needs and desires of a constituency of peoples rooted in deep relationships to the unceded Algonquin territory that Carleton occupies. As a collective, we are tasked with the work of activating, tending to, and being good stewards of the relationships between the campus community and the land itself. As a Committee, we are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that every step of the design and execution of the project is attentive to the deep reciprocity between the land upon which the Indigenous Learning Place is situated and the self-determination, history and laws of the Algonquin Nation. As such, our work is deeply relational in focus, and driven by an ethic of reciprocity through both space and time.
Ojigkwanong, Carleton’s Indigenous centre
Carleton University, Ottawa, ON, 2013

Functions  – Ojigkwanong, Carleton’s Indigenous centre, is open to the campus community to learn about and practice First Nations, Inuit and Métis cultures, traditions and worldviews. It is a hub for student activities throughout the year – academic study sessions and workshops, social gatherings, cultural events, visiting Elders, etc. Ojigkwanong includes a kitchenette, lounge and study space, computer lab and printer, telephone booth, Elder’s room and a study room. For many students this space is truly “a home away from home.”

Themes  – The word Ojigkwanong means “Morning Star” in Algonquin. The space was a project put forward by Carleton’s Centre for Aboriginal Culture and Education (CACE). It was named in 2013 after a group of students, faculty, and other staff members made their way to Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, a reserve in Québec. There they requested the help of several Elders; CACE sought a name that would proudly grace the centre. The ceiling installation is composed as modulating patterns within the overall collaborative weave, with their configurations and inter-connected parts envisioned as metaphors for the Aboriginal Centre’s vision and focus. The design originates from one singular band of birch plywood with its ends overlapped together to create a circular frame recalling the basic frame of the traditional native drum. Thus, the basic design elements are the circle, the drum and the braided and/or woven ‘sounds’ emanating from this source.

Consultants/artists/builders – Architect: Douglas Cardinal
The light Keeper Ceremonial Space installation was designed and built by Manuel Báez, Associate Professor at the Azrieli School of Architecture and Urbanism, along with architecture students and in consultation with Douglas Cardinal.
Tipi
Carleton University, Ottawa, ON

Themes – The Tipi teachings reflect the stories and values of the people and include obedience, respect, humility, happiness, love, faith, kinship, cleanliness, thankfulness, sharing, strength, good child rearing, hope, ultimate protection, control flaps, etc. The amount of poles vary but on average there are 15 poles to make the structure of the tipi. For every pole in the tipi, there is a teaching. Tipi teachings that reflect the stories and values of the people include strength, honesty, bravery, good child rearing and humility which are represented in the poles. Together, the poles of a tipi make it incredibly strong, much like a community. By removing a pole the structure is weakened.

Community involved – Carleton’s tipi was made in Wikwemikong First Nation and represents the university’s commitment to Indigenous students and communities. It is a familiar site on campus and all are welcome to come in.
“Eneywing”, First Peoples’ House of Learning
Gzowski College, Trent University, Peterborough, ON, 2013

Functions – The First Peoples’ House of Learning is the home of Indigenous student services and Indigenous campus and community initiatives at Trent University. Students live in the upper three storeys of the complex, while the rest of the building is partitioned out between classrooms and faculty offices; a nod to the British college model where living and learning are tightly integrated. The expansive campus green, visible from most of the building, has become a hive of activity, where students play Frisbee and midnight baseball games as well as attend outdoor classes. An annual Elders and Traditional Peoples Gathering is held every year at Trent University.

Themes – The building is called “Enweying”, which means the way we speak together in Anishnaabemowin. The college is named after Peter Gzowski, a Canadian journalist and broadcaster who made his living engaging in dialogue about Canada. The building is meant to have a bold visual identity that fits with the rest of the school’s Canadian Brutalism style. The colours of the building are derived from the four colours of a medicine wheel: yellow, red, black and white. The design team used the vision statement developed by the First Peoples House design honouring the land, creating a respectful community and acting as a beacon. The ground floor of the building is open to create a sense of sitting gently on the land. The Atrium (lower level of Gzowski with the “Red Lights”) is open to students to sit study and eat. It’s also where one will find classrooms and the First Peoples House of Learning, including the First People’s Lecture Hall, the Nozhem Performance Space, the Ernie and Florence Benedict Room (Gathering Space) and other ceremonial spaces indoors and out.

 Consultants/artists/builders – Stantec Architecture & Two Row

Budget – $ 28 million
The Indigenous Gathering Place
Mohawk College, Hamilton, ON, 2016

Functions – In the main courtyard of Hamilton’s Mohawk College the Hoop Dance Indigenous Gathering Place (IGP) provides a space for learning, ceremony and socializing. Designed through a series of workshops with elders of Six Nations and Mohawk students – its form expresses Indigenous concepts of sustainability, of time and inclusiveness. The IGP honours Aboriginal traditions and promotes First Nations, Metis and Inuit culture. It welcomes people of all backgrounds, beliefs and ages into an inclusive circle to celebrate Mohawk College’s diverse population.

This landmark is comprised of four elements: an open-air pavilion, a fire circle, a water garden and a traditional garden. This site affords views from surrounding buildings and seating will accommodate 60+ people. The Hoop Dance serves as a venue for traditional ceremonies, a tool for teaching, a place to meditate or quietly study.

Themes – The HOOP Dance honours Indigenous culture, traditions and world views. It welcomes people of all backgrounds, beliefs and ages into an inclusive circle – a place for teaching, music, storytelling, ceremony, relaxation and contemplation. The HOOP Dance is inspired by Indigenous concepts of inclusiveness, time as measured by the sun and moon, the Medicine Wheel and the creation story. Its form is comprised of two radiating and intersecting circles joined by a raised seating platform, referencing traditional wood fabrication methods and the spatial organization of the Longhouse. Collectively the HOOP Dance is comprised of 4 elements: an open air pavilion, a fire circle, a water garden and traditional garden.

Consultants/artists/builders – Built in 2016, the new outdoor pavilion is the result of a collaborative design process between Brook McIlroy Architects; Mohawk College; Aboriginal students of the College; and Elders and members of the Six Nations First Nation and Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation Communities.

Budget – The $650,000 project was supported by the college, the Mohawk Students Association and a private donor.
“Indigenous Circle” Kateweienstha and Nibwaajkaawin
McMaster University, Hamilton, ON, 2016

Functions – Space for teaching outdoor classes, gathering space, workshops, ceremony, and performances. Managed by the director of McMaster’s Indigenous Studies Program, all the departments of the University can inquire about booking the space which can hold 150 people.

Themes – Named Kateweienstha (Learning in the Forest) in Mohawk, and Nibwaajkaawin Teg (Place of Wisdom) in Ojibway.

It represents a commitment to Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous Peoples. The site features a medicine wheel on a stage and stone seating in a natural bowl. The stage overlooks the forest ringing the Cootes Paradise wetland. The space is decorated with symbols that include the Two Row Wampum, an icon of Indigenous and settler cultures living and growing together. Plantings in the space were sourced from Six Nations of the Grand River. In the original scheme (see drawing), within the garden bed, are three decorative rectangular pieces depicting wampum belts which illustrate Haudenosaunee treaties.

Communities involved – It was created under the guidance of McMaster’s Indigenous Education Council, which provides advice and support to the University on all Indigenous matters.

Consultants/Artists/Builders – Invizij Architects, Hamilton

Budget – Built in 2016 by the university’s facility team, the project cost $50,000 and was funded by the office of the president.
Laurentian’s Indigenous Sharing and Learning Centre
Laurentian University, Sudbury, ON, 2016

Functions – The 7,500 square foot circular building will provide a space for cultural experiences, research and support services. It will host everything from public lectures to student support programs to social spaces, and is being constructed in what’s now a parking lot in front of the Parker Building.

Themes – It is a physical embodiment of its commitment to Indigenous education. The Centre will provide the space for scholars, students and community members to engage in research endeavours in social sciences and humanities, and in innovative capacity building to support Indigenous communities. Consistent with the Calls for Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it will become a platform “to advance understanding of reconciliation.” Its design is circular, in a nod to the traditional wigwams of aboriginal people living in this area.

Consultants/artists/builders – The facility is designed by Diamond Schmitt Architects and being built by Cy Rheault Construction

Budget – $3.4 million, the building is financed in part by large corporate donations; $1 million from Glencore and $400,000 from RBC. Its completion is expected in the late fall of 2016 or early winter of 2017.
**Sweat Lodge**
Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, ON, 2008

**Functions** – In 2008, the School of Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Tourism embarked on a service-learning project with the Office of Aboriginal Initiatives. Specifically, two classes offered to help plan and design an interpretive sign for a Sweat Lodge site. The purpose of the sign was to contribute toward improved recognition and protection of a Sweat Lodge Ceremonial area.

**Themes** – Drawing upon the philosophy of experiential education, the project aimed to integrate the theory and practice of heritage interpretation with a meaningful service benefiting the many individuals and organizations that participate in events held at the Ceremonial Lodge Site.

**Communities involvement** – Under the guidance of Ernie Kwandibens, (Elder and Ceremonial Lodge Keeper) and the broader Elders Council, the students learned about Indigenous cultures and ways to respectfully communicate teachings through heritage interpretation. Five design concepts were shared with the Elders Council. The Advanced Heritage Interpretation class was then responsible for applying the Elders’ recommendations to create the final conceptual design, combining many elements from the original sign ideas. The class also researched construction processes, materials, and installation factors. The final design was presented to and approved by the Ceremonial Lodge Keeper, Elders Council, Office of Communications, and the Administrative Executive Committee.
**Native American Medicine Gardens**  
*University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, 2003*

**Functions** – The gardens promote education in Indigenous food sovereignty & production, culture, science, history and Indigenous worldviews. They provide a natural, organic, welcoming, and experiential setting to learn about the importance of integrating Native culture into all aspects of life, including food sovereignty and health.

**Themes** – The Medicine Wheel Garden is anchored by four plants, native to the area, that have traditionally sustained Indigenous Peoples in (what is now known as) Minnesota. The East garden measuring 7,424 square feet was used for vegetable production until 2009, when it was converted into a perennial and herb garden with walking paths; it is used for educating about perennial plants, traditional uses, and Indigenous cultures. Certain portions of the garden are educational plots which showcase a variety of gardening techniques such as square foot gardening, three sisters, companion plantings, worm composting, mulching, and watering. In 2005, a greenhouse space was given to the Medicine Gardens and continues to be used for seed propagation.

**Communities involvement** – The input to the Medicine Gardens is given by a group of Native American traditional gardeners, whose members represent the Sicangu Lakota, Ihanktonwan Nakota, Oglala Lakota, Miami, Odawa, and Eastern Canadian Metis. Tended by student and community volunteers, the garden is also used for vegetable production. On average, the East and South Gardens have produced almost two tons of food each year. While some of the produce is shared among volunteer gardeners, most is donated.

**Consultants/artists/builders** – Established in 2003 by Dr. Barbara Graham, Sicangu Lakota Director of the (then) Woodlands Wisdom Confederation. In 2005, Francis Bettelyoun, Native Master Gardener and Landscape Designer, was hired to oversee the coordination and education in the Medicine Gardens.
Migizii Agamik: Bald Eagle Lodge  
University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, 2008

**Functions** – Migizii Agamik, also known as the Bald Eagle Lodge or the Aboriginal House, is a pivotal project in bringing representation of the Indigenous community to the architecture of the Fort Garry Campus. The building focuses on the integration of Indigenous traditions and cultures and was developed through collaboration with Indigenous designers, representatives, and Elders. The building houses a computer lab, a student lounge, a student council office, gathering space, a boardroom, and a kitchen.

Migizii Agamik welcomes all nations to learn and share. It is a home-away-from-home for students, who make use of the computer lab, student lounge, gathering space, and kitchen. The building was designed by Prairie Architects (including Indigenous graduates of the University of Manitoba) and incorporates many of the Traditional Teachings of Indigenous Peoples of the area, including the use of seven tamarack trees to represent the Seven Sacred Laws. Its Circle Room is used for ceremonies, meetings, and classes that required a sacred, collaborative space. Migizii Agamik is a smudge-friendly building.

**Themes** – The Healing Lodge, a circular spiritual space, is annexed to the west side of the building. Symbols and traditions, central to Indigenous culture, were incorporated into these spaces. Thirteen ribs within the student lounge reflect the thirteen teachings associated with the full Grandmother Moon. The circular centre of the building references Mother Earth, balance and harmony, and the Medicine Wheel, while the seven poles within the building reflect other Indigenous teachings. The four cardinal directions are referenced by the positioning of the lounge. Stretching precisely east to west, a Tyndall stone wall rises from the ground on both ends to provide a path to the building. The main building entrance is oriented towards the rising sun and signifying rebirth and new life.

**Consultants/artists/builders** – Opened in 2008, Prairie Architects Inc.
The Medicine Garden of Indigenous Learning
University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, 2014

Functions – The Medicine Garden of Indigenous Learning is a welcoming place for people to meet, share and learn about the importance and value of traditional knowledge and medicines. Throughout the year, Elders host teaching circles in this space.

Themes – The Medicine Garden of Indigenous Learning is an outdoor space that fosters a welcoming and inclusive community on-campus and promotes Indigenous presence, Indigenous Knowledge exchanges, and community involvement while engaging peoples in growing Indigenous organic and sustainable foods and plants for future generations. The Medicine Wheel Learning Garden is to be primarily used by the Faculty of Medicine to expand cross-cultural understanding of Canada’s First Nation’s heritage. The Medicine Wheel Garden is the first phase of a larger project focusing on the sacred teachings of the Indigenous People. Working closely with Indigenous Elders, medical doctors, and the U of M Physical Plant, the first of four planned Outdoor Learning Classroom phases has been established. This design incorporates many aspects of Indigenous symbolism as well as traditional medicinal plants. Anchoring the medicine wheel is a Sacred and Mighty Tree. In First Nations cultures, the Sacred Tree is a powerful symbol representing the link between human health and that of the natural world. Raised, wooden planters exhibit medicinal flora, while specially-placed boulders outline the paths spreading from the center. These paths separate four rock gardens, which are coloured red, white, yellow, and black in accordance with Indigenous tradition. An outer ring of paving stones completes the circle. Future Outdoor Learning Classrooms will incorporate themes that honour local Inuit and Métis cultures.

Communities involvement – The Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden is a community-based initiative that encourages community engagement widely.

Consultants/artists/builders – B. Rocke Landscaping: Winnipeg Landscaping Consultants
The Garden of Truth and Reconciliation
University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, 2015

Themes – The Turtle Garden was designed to honour the victims of Canada’s Residential School System. It is a place for all Canadians to gather, to remember the atrocities committed, pay their respects, and continue the healing process.

The Turtle Garden project incorporates several symbols of Indigenous culture. The overall design focuses on bringing attention to the practices, beliefs, and traditions of Indigenous Peoples. The east-facing turtle was chosen to honour the Anishinaabeg creation story of Turtle Island, and its importance in the Seven Sacred Teachings. The turtle faces the rising sun, representing the dawn of a new day on the path of healing.

Surrounding the turtle is a paved walkway in the style and colours of the traditional medicine wheel. An inner-ring containing thirteen darker paving stones signifies the annual cycles of the moon. The turtle sits in a red shale rock garden with medicinal and native prairie plants.

Consultants/artists/builders – B. Rocke Landscaping: Winnipeg Landscaping Consultants

National Research Centre for Truth and Reconciliation
University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, 2015

Functions – Preserve the memory of Canada’s Residential School system and legacy. Officially opened in the summer of 2015, it is the permanent home for all statements, documents, and other materials gathered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

The NCTR ensures that survivors and their families have access to their own history, educators can share the Residential School history with new generations of students and researchers can delve more deeply into the Residential School experience. The public can access historical records and other materials to help foster reconciliation and healing.
Gordon Oakes Redbear Students Centre
University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK, 2016

Functions – The building houses the Aboriginal Students’ Centre and Aboriginal student leadership groups—with additional space for learning, gathering and ceremonies.

The design of the building is focused on a central gathering space for forums, ceremonies, lectures and social gathering. The planning of the building is based on the simple notion that the circle is the symbolic base for healing, knowledge and equality; the foundation for all Indigenous ceremonies. Therefore the central gathering space is both the symbolic and systemic base for the building’s plan as each department is anchored to this central space. This acts as a reminder to Aboriginals, and an introduction to non-Aboriginals, about Indigenous world views. There are smudging, pipe ceremonies, elder service of soup and bannock, etc.

Themes – The centre is grounded in the teachings of collaboration, cooperation, humility, reciprocity and sharing. Through teachings, events and ceremonies, the cultures and contributions of Indigenous peoples are recognized and celebrated. The Aboriginal Students’ Centre (ASC) is a welcoming place to make friends and access support. Staff at the ASC are committed to supporting the academic and personal success of Métis, First Nation and Inuit students.

Inside the main hall, the ceiling has the colours of the medicine wheel, as chosen by members of the family of the late Gordon Oakes. It has a special ventilation system that draws up smoke from smudging and pipe ceremonies to a teepee-like opening and vents it to the four directions. Oakes was an influential elder from the Nekaneet First Nation who saw the treaty relationship between indigenous peoples and settlers as a partnership symbolized by a team of two horses working together.

Consultants/artists/builders – The 1,884 square-metre building was designed by Métis and Blackfoot architect Douglas Cardinal and was projected to cost $17 million.
Gathering Place
Selkirk College, Castlegar, BC, 2012

Functions – The Gathering Place provides students with a place to meet, study and relax. It is a facility on the Castlegar Campus that is devoted to enhancing services, and providing a welcoming and supportive environment to Indigenous learners.

Themes – The Gathering Place is a space, which is dedicated to the promotion of Indigenous culture, tradition and ceremony. The Elders Program is now based out of the Castlegar Campus at the Gathering Place where students and staff can visit to connect with community leaders from throughout the region.

Communities involvement – The Elders involved in the program come from a number of different communities including the Okanagan, Cranbrook, Creston, Slocan Valley, Inchelium (Washington), Nakusp, Kaslo, Grand Forks, Trail, Nelson and Castlegar. One of the additional benefits of the program is for the Elders to also build relationships with each other.

Consultants/artists/builders – Opened in 2012. A hand crafted metal art sculpture was commissioned to the BC Indigenous artist, Clint George.

Budget – Selkirk College raised $150,000 in a Complete the Circle campaign along with partners. In support, they have received $600,000 from the Provincial Government’s Gathering Places Capital Fund, $200,000 from Columbia Basin Trust and $50,000 from Teck Metals.
Thompson Rivers University's House of Learning
Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops, BC, 2008

Functions – The 77,000-square-foot facility includes a research library, a learning commons, classrooms and instructional labs, faculty offices, flexible meeting rooms, a gallery, and a café. These elements are unified by a sky lit central atrium featuring a bio-filter ‘living wall’.

An attached single-storey 50-metre-diameter auditorium, known as the Great Hall, modelled after an Interior Salish pit house, features a natural skylight - with a green roof of natural plantings. The ceiling is built from visible pine timbers with a membrane on top. The centre stage is a sprung floor, with 300 seats surrounding it in 360 degrees.

The building is known as a learning commons and is not exclusive to any use. It is intended to be a focal point on campus, allowing classroom teaching, offices, quiet study space, bookable group study areas, book collections and a computer lab. The theatre has a variety of uses, and holds lectures, conferences, and performance art.

Themes – The House of Learning combines modernist architecture of concrete and glass with a lecture theatre inspired by Interior Salish winter homes. This mixed-use building at the heart of the Thompson Rivers University campus creates a dynamic new centre for students and faculty. Design elements inspired by First Nations dwellings and crafts blend with sustainable features. By maximizing sightlines through double storey volumes and extensive glazing, the building presents stunning views of the Thompson River Valley in central British Columbia and provides abundant natural light throughout.

Consultants/artists/builders – David Naime & Diamond Schmitt Architects

Budget – $32-million, the largest sponsors were families and foundations.
Kéxwusm-áyakn Student Centre
Capilano University, North Vancouver, BC, 2013

**Functions** – The goal of the new facility is to enhance the infrastructure of support for First Nations learners, ultimately improving the participation and success rates of students attending Capilano University. It provides a community hub that is used by the university’s First Nations Student Services department advisors, faculty, staff, students and the university’s Indigenous community. The centre is equipped with a kitchenette, computer workstations with Internet access, and a lounge area with video screens. The program comprises a safe place for students of Aboriginal ancestry (First Nations, Inuit, Métis) to relax and meet new people; information and resources relevant to all First Nations; a study space, a meeting place and a place to eat lunch; computers and printer; fridge, microwave and sink; telephone for local calls; notice board for events; cultural workshops; in resident Elders; etc.

**Themes** – Kéxwusm-áyakn (A Place to Meet) - the Squamish Nation name given to the Kéxwusm-áyakn Student Centre - provides a welcoming multi-purpose space for students to meet, study, share meals, collaborate and learn from each other and First Nations Elders. Additional guidance and mentorship is provided by the members of Kéxwusm-áyakn’s Elders-in-Residence program who engage students by sharing their knowledge and Indigenous teachings.

**Consultants/artists/builders** – It was designed by Alfred Waugh, partner in Formline Architecture + Urbanism. Of Chipewyan heritage, Waugh, who is based on the North Shore, also designed two adjacent outdoor pavilions that will be used for ceremonies and educational gatherings.

**Budget** – Government invested $600,000 in the centre. Opened in 2013.
**Mi Chap Tukw, Aboriginal Gathering Place**
British Columbia Institute of Technology, Burnaby, BC, 2008

**Functions** – The renovation within the main building includes three offices, a reception area, a student lounge, a computer lab, a fully equipped kitchen and a study area. This area is connected by a heavy timber pavilion in the courtyard containing a multi-purpose room, washrooms and a quiet room inspired by the sweat lodge. The pavilion structure blends the architectural form of a pit house and a long house. The roof is a folded plane emerging from the ground covered in a planted roof to reduce its visual impact from the upper floors of the surrounding courtyard buildings. The Pavilion faces the courtyard and a large double glazed wall invites all students passing by to use the multi-purpose space as a place to study and exchange ideas. The courtyard was redesigned to provide outdoor event space and shelter cultural activities.

**Themes** – Mi Chap Tukw means “a home away from home,” the logo, which is called Snewayelh, means “teachings,” and the hand symbolizes the transfer of knowledge from one generation to the next, raised in the Coast Salish welcome gesture. The Aboriginal Gathering Place is a modest sized multi-purpose facility providing resources for First Nations students in the context of an urban institutional complex of 1960s concrete slab buildings enclosing a series of courtyards. This facility is a renovation of a small portion of a large concrete building and a post and beam pavilion engaging an adjacent courtyard. A First Nations presence is integrated into the fabric of a larger urban complex which is discovered both on a pedestrian route through the courtyard and the ground level of the existing building.

**Consultants/artists/builders** – Alfred Waugh, architect from the Fond Du Lac (Denesuline) Nation of northern Saskatchewan, Formline Architects. Completed in 2011, building area 1,200 square foot.

**Budget** – It was made possible through the Aboriginal Gathering Place grant from the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development of B.C in 2008.
The First Nations Long House  
University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, 1993

**Functions** – The First Nations Longhouse is a central hub for programming and services with an emphasis on Indigenous students, and the wider Indigenous community. It has four major components: a resource centre, the Great Hall, the Longhouse, and the Spirit Renewal Hall (Sty-Wet-Tan). It is also contains a centre with study and social spaces, a computer lab, and access to tutoring, counseling, and many other forms of support. In addition, the Longhouse contains the Indigenous Teacher Education Program (NITEP), the First Nations House of Learning (FNHL), and a range of student organizations.

The Sty-Wet-Tan Great Hall is 3600 square foot, and can host up to 400 people. It is constituted of four house-posts and two supporting roof beams; each carved by noted northwest coast artists. The space contains other artworks, a dance floor, a stage area and a fully equipped kitchen. Situated in the University’s arboretum, it is a multipurpose space suitable for receptions, performances, workshops, conferences, seminars, feasts, banquets and other gatherings.

The Xwi7xwa library (pronounced whei-wha) began in the 1970s with the founding of the Indian Education Resource Centre. The collection later came under the care of the NITEP. When the First Nations House of Learning opened the Longhouse in 1993, NITEP transferred the collection to Xwi7xwa. The collections currently consist of approximately 12,000 items, including books, videos, curriculum resources, journals and newspapers, maps, posters, theses and dissertations, and some archival materials.

**Themes** – Indigenous culture, learning and ceremony following the teachings of the Elder Tsimilano (Vince Stogan): respect, relationships, responsibility and reverence. The low-lying structure was inspired by the style of the traditional Coast Salish longhouse, which was adopted out of respect for the Musqueam people who have been based on Point Grey peninsula since time immemorial.
The Xwi7xwa Library is built in the style of a traditional Interior Salish pit house. The entire structure is sited according to the compass points of north and south; a measure significant to Indigenous cosmologies. The building form combines the simplicity of traditional construction with a more contemporary form, thus emphasizing the progressive nature of the community it contains. A curving exterior stair connects the UBC longhouse and the UBC campus, descending to a central court through a cedar framework which emulates the form of the traditional Pit House.

The traditional shed form of the Longhouse is demonstrated through the varying pitch of the roof rafters. This curving form contrasts the simple planked form of the Great Hall, which is separated from the main body of the Longhouse by means of a glass sheathed corridor, exposing the massive timber construction. Landscaping helps to modulate the light entering the building; cedar decks and boardwalks combined with river rock, gravel, wildflowers and a snag-filled waterfall create a natural exterior environment.

Community involvement – Concentration on First Nations of (what is now called) British Columbia. The project was the result of nearly five years of dedicated work by students, elders, faculty, staff, and community, who shared a vision to create a home away from home for First Nations, Metis, and Inuit students.


Budget – $4.2 million, the sources of funds includes $1 million from Jack Bell and $1 million from Bill Bellman.
Tu’Wusht / xʷc̓ic̓əsəm Indigenous Health Research and Education Garden at UBC Farm
University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, 2005

Functions – The Indigenous Health Research and Education Garden hosts the Culturally Relevant Urban Wellness program and Sharing our Wisdom: A Holistic Aboriginal Health Initiative, a research project focusing on understanding the effectiveness of traditional Indigenous healing knowledges when addressing the health inequity experienced by Indigenous Peoples. Food harvested from the garden is used as part of a monthly community Feast Bowl which brings together students, staff, faculty, and members of the public to cook and eat.

The garden includes numerous medicinal plants which are used in medicine-making workshops and to share traditional knowledge with the Medicine Collective, a group of Indigenous Elders and Knowledge-Keepers. A teepee is used for ceremonies and celebrations such as the harvest feasts. During these ceremonies, the traditional cedar smokehouse is used for smoking salmon and participants stay overnight at the farm to mark the seasonal shift on the land.

Themes – With an emphasis on teaching, community engagement, and research, the garden aims to serve the educational and research needs related to Indigenous knowledges and its intersections with other ways of knowing and praxis. Garden Programming and initiatives are particularly focused on food security, traditional plant knowledge, and land-based pedagogies while increasing participants’ knowledge and access to both traditional and non-traditional plant uses. The garden is guided by the principle that ‘food is medicine’ and follows the research ethic framework of the “4R’s: respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility”.

Community involvement – Created in 2005, the project (originally called the Urban Aboriginal Community Kitchen/Garden) has been growing and sharing food with Vancouver’s Aboriginal community since its inception. The project itself came out of an initiative of the Vancouver Native Health Society that runs programs in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) for urban Indigenous Peoples. In 2013, Coast Salish Elder Corrine Mitchell renamed it Tu’wusht which in the Tla’amin Coast Salish dialect means ‘We Belong’.
The Musqueam Post (also known as the Musqueam sʔiːtqeq̓ yəqeq̓ən)
University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, 2016

Themes – The post tells an origin story of the Musqueam involving a two-headed serpent. The old people spoke of a small lake called xʷməθəq̓əm (Camosun Bog) where the sʔiːtqeq̓ yəqeq̓ən (double-headed serpent) originated. They were warned as youth to be cautious and not go near or they would surely die. This sʔiːtqeq̓ yəqeq̓ən was so massive its winding path from the lake to the staɬəw (river) became the creek flowing through Musqueam to this day. Everything the serpent passed over died and from its droppings bloomed a new plant, the məθkʷəy̓ . For this reason the people of long ago named that place xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam – place of the məθkʷəy̓ ). This qeqeq̓ən represents our xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) ancestors and the ongoing connection to them and this land through their teachings. The figure is holding the sʔiːtqeq̓ yəqeq̓ən’s tail to showcase this sχʷəy̓em’s (ancient histories) passage through generations, relating how we became known as xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) people – People of the məθkʷəy̓ plant. The scalloping reflects the sʔiːtqeq̓ yəqeq̓ən’s path and trigons represent the unique məθkʷəy̓ plant. The sʔiːtqeq̓ yəqeq̓ən’s stomach is said to have been as big as a storage basket, designed here as an oval. The artist drew upon these traditional design elements to depict this rich history.

Communities involvement – Artist: Brent Sparrow Jr

Consultants/artists/builders – The building company is Syncra Construction and the architect is PFS Studios. Completed in April 2016, the renovations included: salvage of existing landscaping; demolition & installation of concrete foundation and adaptor plate; re-established waterproofing; re-installed landscaping; installed feature lighting; and crane installation of Musqueam Pole.
Reconciliation Pole  
University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, 2017

**Themes** – Honouiring a Time Before, During and After Canada’s Indian Residential Schools. The Reconciliation Pole is one of two UBC initiatives that aim to capture the long trajectory of Indigenous-Canadian relations and to ensure that one part of that, the history of Canada’s Indian residential schools, will never be forgotten.

The other initiative is the construction of the Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre, located between the Koerner Library and the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre. The Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre will provide former students and their families with access to the records of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and give students and visitors ways to understand the history and lasting effects of Indian residential schools as a context for thinking about contemporary relationships.

**Consultants/artists/builders** – The University of British Columbia has partnered with a private donor to commission the carving of a 55-foot pole by 7idansuu (Edenshaw), James Hart, Haida master carver and Hereditary Chief. It was installed on the Campus on April 1st, 2017.
Indian Residential School History and Dialog Centre
University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, 2018

Functions – The new centre, and possibly a memorial sculpture, will provide a central and visible location for re-thinking the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Canadian society in general. It will provide former students and their families with access to the records of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, and give students and visitors ways to understand the history and lasting effects of Indian residential schools as a context for thinking about contemporary relationships. Advanced use of interactive media will give visitors the opportunity to explore extensive records and testimony and form their own understandings. The centre will also serve as a hub for academic and community research, education and public programming. An affiliate site to the National Research Centre for Truth and Reconciliation in Winnipeg, IRSC will particularly focus on the experiences of Indigenous peoples in B.C., where many of the schools were located, and will provide local access to records for survivors and their families on the West Coast.

Themes – The building will recognize the history and experiences of residential school survivors, and memorialize the thousands of Indigenous children who died while in attendance. The Dialogue Centre is a powerful recognition of Aboriginal history and presence in the heart of campus, in an area that is associated with knowledge, records and the preservation of memory. It will be a meeting place on campus for community members and scholars, and a place of research, education at UBC and beyond UBC, community engagement, and reconciliation.

Consultants/artists/builders – In August 2015, after a competitive bid process, two firms were selected: PFS Studio Landscape Architects for the Library Garden and Formline Architecture, Architects for the Indian Residential Schools History and Dialogue Centre.

Budget – $5.5-million, scheduled for completion in the 2017-18 academic year. When complete, the IRSC will be a donor-funded, two-storey building covering approximately 6,500 square feet.
SHQ’APTHUT: The Gathering Place
Vancouver Island University, Nanaimo, BC, 2010

Functions – The Gathering Place at VIU is dedicated to serve First Nations students, Elders, and broader community members, and to accommodate post-secondary support and cultural functions. In addition to office and service space, the Gathering Place accommodates various uses of traditional practices such as ceremonial dances, gatherings, totem pole carving and drum making, while providing adequate study space and research areas for students. The Student Lounge and the Sacred Space is housed in a longitudinal space supported by a monumental post and beam structure. Both of these zones—book ended with covered outdoor carving spaces—preserve the sense of the longhouse and serve the many program needs. The offices and services contained within a lower structure incorporate the planted green roof. Together, the three zones interconnect to provide a sense of communal space solidifying the experience of being part of the larger Long House space. The ceremonial space is approximately 1500 square feet and is used for small gatherings and sharing of culture and traditions in an educational setting.

Themes – The design of The Gathering Place holistically integrates sustainable strategies such as Geothermal energy, rainwater collection and a green roof while respecting traditional order and organization. The building draws its inspiration from the Pre-European Coast Salish Longhouse, orientating the building along a North-South Axis with its sacred entrance facing East. A sliding cedar panel façade system extends over the glazing; main entrance and carving area in a checkerboard fashion to reflect the organic nature of the cedar planks used in the past and dramatize the longitudinal nature of this building type.

Consultants/artists/builders – Formline Architects. Completed in 2010, the building size is 5650 square foot.
First Peoples House
University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, 2010

Functions – The First Peoples House is a social, cultural and academic centre for Indigenous students and serves as a safe and welcoming place that encourages the building of community. The ceremonial hall is built in the Coast Salish Long House design. It is used for ceremonies and special events such as graduation celebrations, and accommodates 200 people. Carved cedar posts stand outside the hall. The room has a fireplace and wood bleachers. The program consists of an entry hall, ceremonial hall, change rooms for dancers, elders’ lounge, lounge, kitchen, classroom for 25 students, seminar room, computer lab, reading room, and faculty/staff/director/counselor/native union’s offices, etc. The corridor features a gallery of native art and artifacts.

Themes – This multi-purpose educational facility has contemporary and traditional house posts welcoming visitors at a main entry plaza. Acting as a home away from home, the centre is a place of culture honour and spirit. The design of the building is predominantly Coast Salish, with influences from the surrounding coastal First Nations Cultures. Inspiration is drawn from traditional structures and their ability to mediate the environment, maximize sunlight, ventilation, natural resources and local materials. Sustainable features include a green roof, storm retention pond and natural ventilation. The site has been landscaped extensively with native trees and vegetation, including Garry oak and Douglas-fir trees.

Communities involvement – The house was originally to be situated on the edge of campus, but elders recommended a location near the central quad to discourage students’ feelings of isolation. Waugh’s firm worked closely with First Nations leaders, Indigenous staff, faculty, and students.

Consultants/artists/builders – Completed in 2010, the floor area is 12,875 square foot and the architect is Alfred Waugh from the Fond du Lac Denesuliné Nation.

Budget – $7 million
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