



# Architectural Co-design for Indigenous Housing

## WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM CASE STUDIES?

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# Presentation Outline

- Purpose
- Context
- Collaborative Architectural Co-Design – definition
- Case Studies and Best Practices
- Key Learnings for Indigenous Housing
- Contact Info & Document Links



# Purpose

- How collaborative architectural co-design principles and processes lead to excellence and best practices applicable to Indigenous housing
- Themes
- Case Study Examples



# Housing Matters/Architecture Matters

- Housing is fundamental to wellbeing of families and individuals
- For Indigenous housing, architectural design matters:
  - Meets physical needs, household composition
  - Fosters a sense of belonging, contributes to healing
  - Reflects Indigenous identity and is a base for cultural expression, reclamation and growth



# Context

- 2016-17 Indigenous Task Force established by Royal Architectural Institute of Canada
- ITF membership includes Indigenous and non-Indigenous architects and designers who are working in Indigenous contexts
- Fosters and promotes Indigenous design in Canada.



Royal Architectural Institute of Canada

# Indigenous Task Force



# International Indigenous Architectural and Design Symposium

- May 27, 2017
- Gathered speakers and 160 delegates from across Canada, New Zealand, Australia and the United States.
- The first ever event privileging Indigenous architecture and design in Canada and across the globe.



*“The first ever event privileging Indigenous architecture and design in Canada” May 2017*



# Themes in Indigenous Architecture

- Architecture is a positive force to better reflect, sustain and empower Indigenous people and communities.
- Collaborative Co-Design process is fundamental
- Elders, community, architects and designers together create a common vision



# Case Studies

## Collaborative Architectural Co-Design:

- RAIC sought to further explore this concept through Case Studies
- Funding from Indigenous Services Canada
- Case Studies focussed on First Nation communities – range of asset types
- Highly applicable to Indigenous housing – Urban, Rural, and Northern, First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities.



# Four Case Studies Exemplifying Best Practices in Architectural Co-design and Building with First Nations



# What is Collaborative Co-design?

- Process between Indigenous clients and architects
- Vision of the clients/community is articulated and developed through working with architects who listen and learn
- Results in building designs anchored in Indigenous peoples' connections with the natural world
- Reflect who they are as people – their traditions, culture, values and lifestyles, and their aspirations.





# Project Initiation



# Architect Selection



# Six Nations of the Grand River - Schools



# Pilot Nunavik Duplex



# Squamish and Lil'Wat - Cultural Centre Whistler, B.C.



# Splatsin First Nation – Quilakawa Centre Business Hub



# Collaborative Co-Design Process (1)

- No formula – each process took its own form
- All had steering committees which included Chiefs, accountable officials
- Some held design charrettes, community open houses to review designs
- Elders were specially consulted in every process and often served on the Steering Committees
- Two of the architects selected were Indigenous and the other two had experience designing in Indigenous contexts



# Collaborative Co-Design Process (2)

- All architects engaged, listened carefully to the community needs, visions and preferences and worked closely with the clients throughout the design phase
- Through an iterative process, architects brought design options and solutions until their clients were satisfied that their vision developed into a tangible design which:
  - Met functional requirements
  - Technically sound
  - Reflected values, culture, traditions, lifestyles and aspirations



# Architects Listened – Iterative Process





Elders  
found and  
cut their  
own  
“character  
logs” from  
the  
Splatsin  
forest

# Architectural Design Features

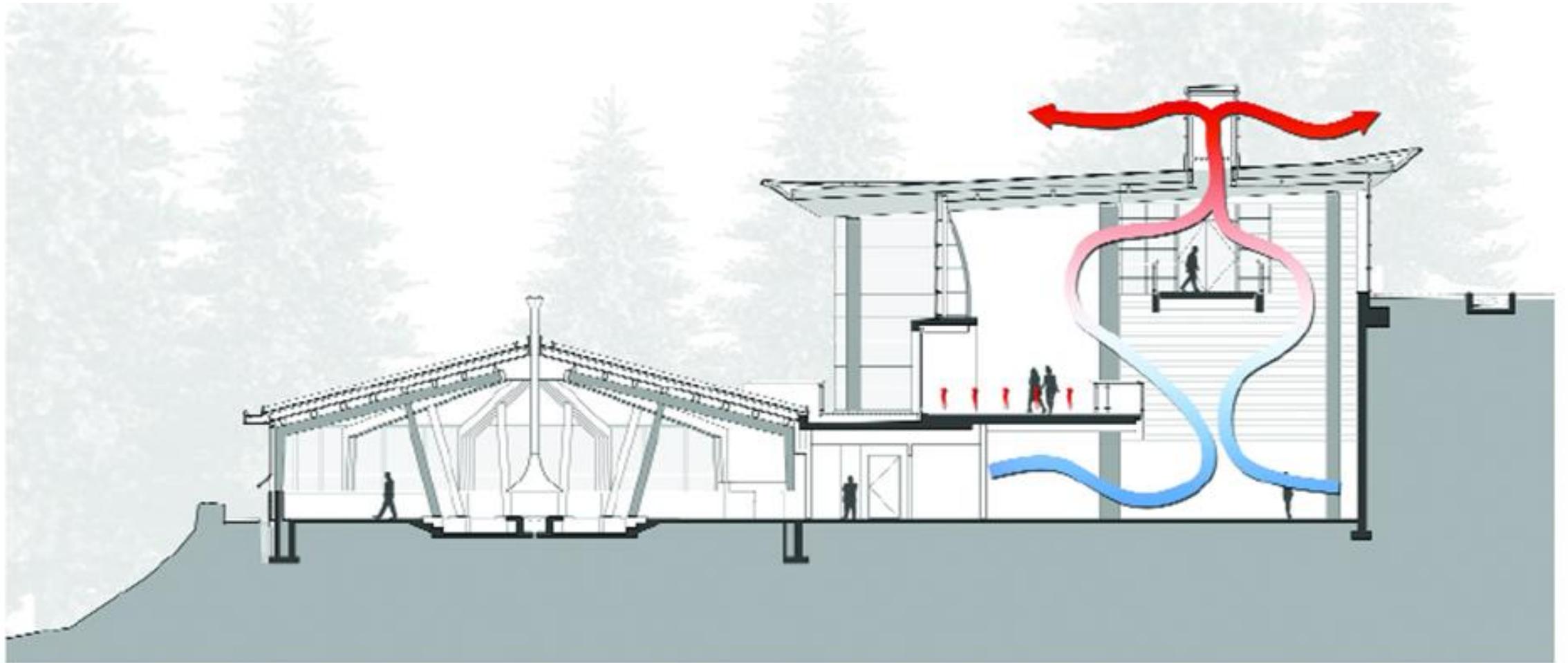
- Ancestral building forms/symbolism
- Wood and other traditional materials
- Anchored to nature and seasons – siting, orientation, natural light, cardinal directions
- Maximized energy efficiency and conservation - insulation, and natural heating, cooling, and air circulation



# Squamish Lil'Wat

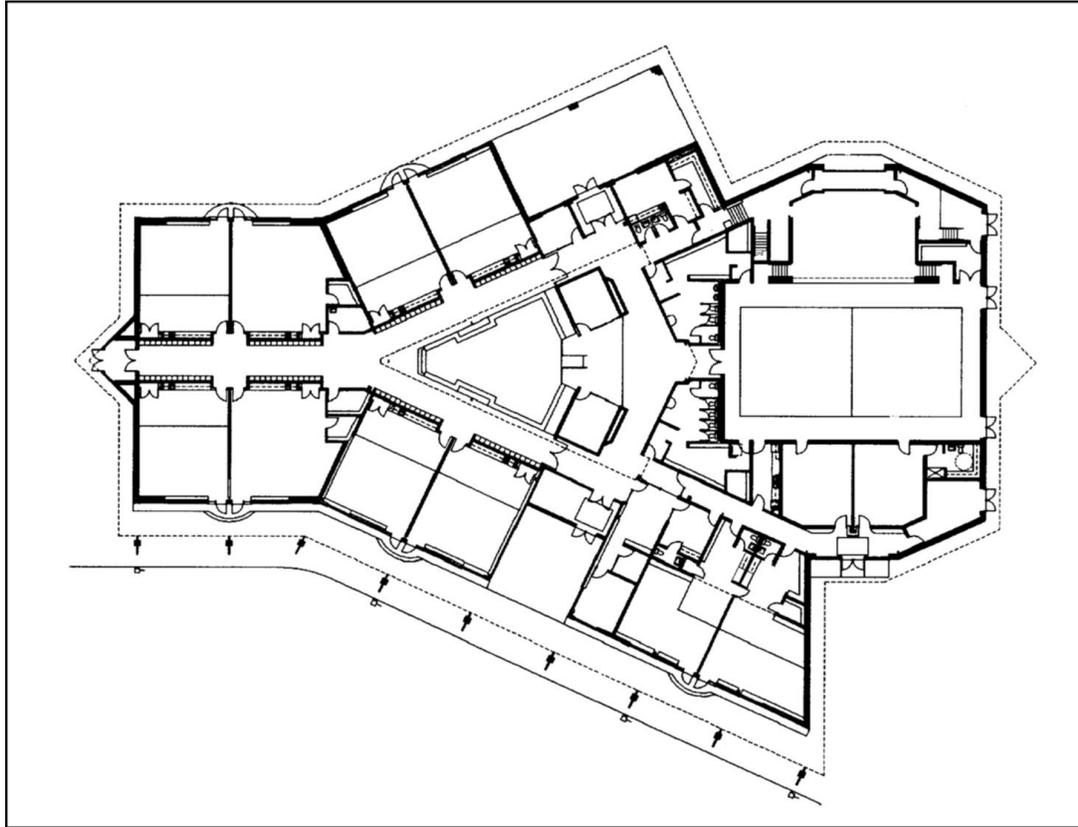


# Squamish Lil'Wat



**Natural ventilation patterns**

# Emily C. General School - “a giant sundial”

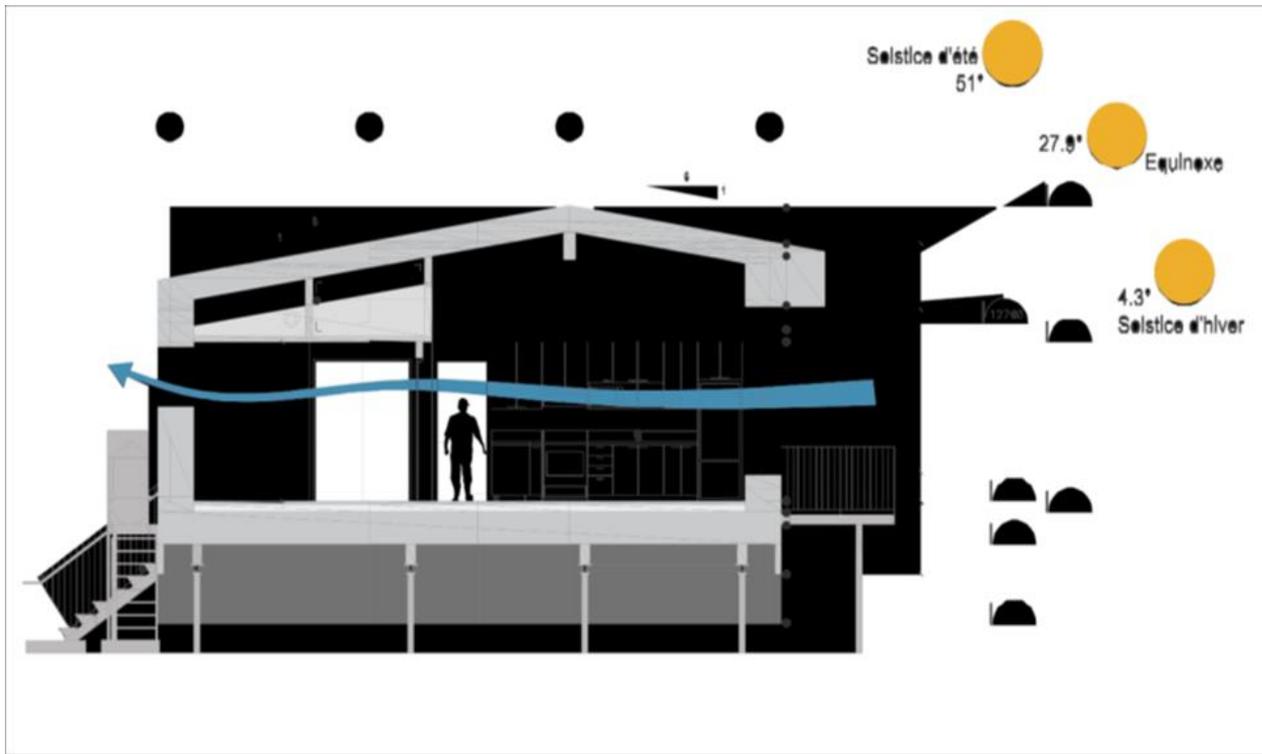


# Interior Design Spaces

- Interior spaces anchored in cultural references, shapes and materials
- Carefully designed to facilitate how the space would be used
- Commissioned art and artist's installations
- Historical and contemporary artifacts and spaces to convey culture and facilitate traditional practices and teachings



# Nunavik Duplex – light & large flexible kitchen space



# Quilakwa Centre



# Building Process

- Steering Committees stayed involved right through to project completions
- Facilities were built by Indigenous people
- Indigenous-owned construction firms, skilled trades
- Best practices in employment, skills development, pride in their work
- Strong sense of community ownership



80% was built by Six Nations Band Members



# Outcomes/Legacy

- Experience with architectural co-design was positive
- Outcomes were far-reaching
- Buildings resonate with Elders and the community and are of lasting value
- Architectural innovations are now being applied more broadly

*“For all four projects Indigenous leaders were determined to complete the projects to reflect community identity and become a base for cultural reclamation and growth”*









# Key Learnings for Indigenous Housing

- Select architect who understands needs and cultural context
- Expertise in energy conservation, use of natural materials
- Collaborative Co-Design process is fundamental
- Elders, community, architects and designers together create a common vision
- Attention to family structures, cultural needs



# Key Learnings for Indigenous Housing

- Designs resonate and contribute positively to healing, cultural learning and transmission
- Budget for art and installations
- Look for value added e.g. Indigenous involvement in building construction, interior design
- Home – a sense a belonging, pride
- A sound sustainable structure and community asset



*“Architecture has an important role in giving agency back to Indigenous people to reclaim their heritage, reconnect with their learnings and traditions, and express their culture and aspirations.”*



# Contacts and Information

- “Four Case Studies Exemplifying Best Practices in Architectural Co-Design and Building with First Nations” 2018  
<https://www.raic.org/raic/four-case-studies-exemplifying-best-practices-architectural-co-design-and-building-first>
- Indigenous Task Force, Royal Architectural Institute of Canada  
<https://www.raic.org/raic/indigenous-task-force>
- Report on International Indigenous Architectural and Design Symposium 2017 <https://www.raic.org/news/reconciliation-place-making-and-identity-raic-releases-report-international-indigenous>

**Thank You!**  
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