

RAIC | IRAC

Architecture Canada

613-241-3600 | fax/télé. 613-241-5750 | info@raic.org

November 7, 2017

Re: RAIC Indigenous Task Force

Dear Senator Patterson,

On June 9, 2016, the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC) Indigenous Task Force (ITF) was officially launched in Snuneymuxw territory (Nanaimo, British Columbia) during the 2016 RAIC Festival of Architecture. The core purpose of the ITF is to foster and promote Indigenous design and architecture in Canada in First Nations, rural, Métis and Northern communities, and urban spaces, and to advocate with and on behalf of Indigenous communities. The Royal Architectural Institute of Canada and the ITF alike believe strongly that Architecture is a public-spirited profession with an important role in reconciliation – addressing injustices by giving agency back to Indigenous people.

In the short time since its formation, the ITF has already taken great strides in forming its identity and our mandates continue to evolve. In May we (the ITF and the RAIC) hosted the inaugural Indigenous Architecture and Design Symposium in Ottawa, welcoming over a hundred architects and allied professionals from all over the world to discuss critical topics linked to design and Indigenous peoples. We have periodic conference call meetings and have had two annual general meetings to help clarify our goals and collective mission. The ITF has already consulted on the proposed Indigenous cultural centre in Ottawa, as well as proposed competitions for housing for rural communities and Indigenous inspired developments in urban centres. We have recently formed sub-committees to discuss the Ottawa project as well as an educational-based best practices of community engagement by universities through Indigenous-related research and design.

With only approximately 17 Indigenous registered architects in Canada (out of approximately 10,000) and only 3 Indigenous architectural academics (out of a few hundred), one of the most significant initial observations was the poor representation of Indigenous people in our profession in Canada, and thus the lack of our voice in Indigenous design topics. Out of these discussions, we formed a proposal to represent Canada at the Venice Biennale in Italy to celebrate the work of Indigenous architects on Turtle Island (North America) and to have our voices celebrated for the first time on an international stage. Under the leadership of Douglas Cardinal, the proposal was successful, an accomplishment directly resulting from the formation of the ITF. We invite you to visit UNCEDED in Venice May 2018 - November 2018.

We remain a very small group with a very limited capacity given members of the ITF are volunteers as all are full-time employees, practitioners, or students. However, we all recognize the essential role we can play collectively in advocating for the Indigenous voice in design-related practice. There are two Indigenous registered architects working in the north, Chris Clarke who works for the NWT provincial government, and Harriet Burdett-Moulton, who works for Stantec in Iqaluit. Other ITF members have worked with Indigenous communities for many years and offer their experiences to our collective. We aspire to be a resource for a variety of initiatives to address the needs and desires of all Indigenous



RAIC | IRAC

Architecture Canada

613-241-3600 | fax/télé. 613-241-5750 | info@raic.org

communities in a respectful and appropriate manner, where they ultimately take ownership of the design process and hence the buildings and environments that follow.

With specific regards to design in the north, we are still witnessing a hackneyed narrative that continually positions objectified technical solutions derived from the south and then applied to the north. There is a lot of technological progress currently related to climate change, for instance, that can help with the specifics of low-carbon, higher efficiencies, etc. – without question. The architectural community at large is showing a significant amount of interest in the north as a frontier territory for problem solving linked to these exact questions. The main message we are hoping to convey is that this is not solely a technological question with an easy answer because even if a building is high efficiency, low carbon, climate change adaptable, etc. etc. etc., but still conceived by and implemented from the south, it will never be a good fit with the people and the land, nor will it be sustainable in a more comprehensive sense. We argue that the right path is broader, longer-term, and begins with the cultural values, knowledge, and aspirations of the people in each community. It is their metrics for success to be prioritized over any settler-imposed ones.

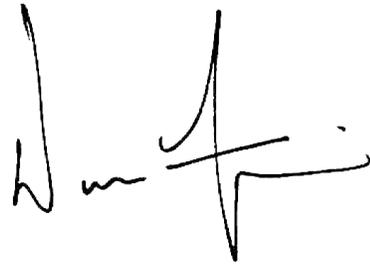
We feel this is the most essential first step to a truly sustainable architecture that resonates with northern communities and we hope that our collective voice will continue to support and advocate theirs. Furthermore, we hope that the Indigenous architects of Canada might inspire young creative minds from the north to pursue careers that will return them to their communities to design with their knowledges, cultures, languages, collective values and aspirations. This will ultimately lead to the kinds of buildings and communities that are not only technically sustainable (efficient, low-carbon, etc.) but embraced and rooted in the people of the north.

On behalf of our colleagues, we thank you for your interest in the ITF and hope we might be able to collaborate in some capacity in the future. Should you want to speak with us or a representative of the ITF, please let us know.

All Our Relations,



Patrick Luugigyoo Stewart, PhD, Associate Professor
MArch, BArch, BEDS, BA
Architect.AIBC, MRAIC, LEED AP
Chair, RAIC Indigenous Task Force



David Fortin, PhD, Architect AAA
Asst Professor, Incoming Director
MRAIC, LEED AP
McEwen School of Architecture

